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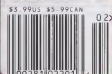
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Scenes

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RIGHT: Darrel Anderson's Chess Bone City invites the viewer to "take an imaginary tour of Mars." Anderson is the subject of this issue's Gallery.

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departments

6 LETTERS

8 MOVIES

By Resa Nelson

The Two Towers is a part of history for actors and audiences alike.

18 FOLKROOTS

By Heinz Insu Fenkl

A fortune cookie imparts crumbs of wisdom and morsels of history.

26 BOOKS

By Gaban Wilson and Paul Wutcover

Chilling horror and weird fantasy find a home in two new anthologies.

76 GALLERY

By Karen Haber

Darrel Anderson: Rooted in fantasy.

82 GAMES

By Eric T. Baker

Get medieval with Buffy and the Scooby Gang in a new RPG.

90 CONTRIBUTORS

fiction

32 FABLE FROM A CAGE

By Tim Pratt

A fable, by its nature, has to have a moral, doesn't it? No one ever said it had to be a good moral, though.

40 STEGOSAURUS BOY

By Steven Popkes

The earth hides its secrets big and small. But perseverance, determination, and most of all, hope, can uncover them in the end.

60 A HUNTER'S ODE TO HIS BAIT

By Carrie Vaughn

Make no mistake—love has its price. Often it's higher than you might want to pay, but it's what you count as valuable that determines it.

66 RETURN STORES

By Karen Traviss

Magic isn't always found in wooded glades and stone circles. Sometimes it's found in wooden beams and stone girders.

72 HERE AFTER LIFE

By Devon Monk

When you're on your deathbed, will you get a second chance? Or a third, a fourth, a fifth? If you do, will you take it?

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DEALER INQUIRES WELCOME!

Dear Shawna McCarthy,

Greetings. May this letter find you all in the best of spirits. I received your rejection note and my manuscript posted recently. I thank you guys for your time and consideration. I'm writing another story that I have tailored specifically for your magazine and in compliance with your writer's guidelines and hope to submit it in six months or so.

I cannot stress enough to you how much it means to me that the editor of such a fine publication will read work from unpublished writer such as myself. You could easily deal with only established writers and no doubt have an endless supply of manuscripts. I pray to all the gods that the "Harveys" of the world don't harden your hearts to the rest of us who truly appreciate your situation. In a separate letter you'll find my check for a year's subscription. It is my way of making up for the one lost. I read someone else's issues, and I am pretty much broke, but I don't want to miss a single word in case of our separation.

In closing, I'd like to say that I look up to each and every one of you. Your professionalism and your writers' creativity are what I strive for in myself.

Thomas Evans
Beaumont, Texas

Dear *Realms of Fantasy*:

I thought I would write to you to say how much I enjoy your wonderful magazine. My girlfriend Marilyn introduced me to it last year. The stories are brilliant, and the artwork is exceptional. Being very interested in mythology and medieval history, your magazine covers all my interests: knights, warriors, kings, fair maidens, and dragons. I have now finished *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, which I enjoyed immensely, and now I am reading the "Conan" novels of Robert Howard.

Leigh Marshall
Magill, Australia

Dear Ms. McCarthy:

First, I would like to tell you that I think *Realms of Fantasy* is excellent! I've been a subscriber for some time now and can't remember a time I was ever unhappy with the quality of the magazine.

I am an inmate in the Texas prison system and find a temporary escape from the dreariness by reading fantasy and playing fantasy roleplaying games.

That leads me to the purpose of this letter: Due to the fact that we have no access

to the Internet, I find it hard to locate the gaming books *Realms* reviews. So, I was wondering if you could publish the addresses to a few publishing companies so that I could write and get their book lists. The ones I was mostly interested in are: Kenzer & Company, Atlas Games, White Wolf, and Green Ronin Publishing.

I know this may be an unorthodox way of getting these addresses, but any and all help concerning this would be greatly appreciated.

James Shaffer

Atlas Games, P.O. Box 131233, Roseville, MN 55113; Kenzer & Company, 25667 Hillview Court, Mundelein, IL 60060; White Wolf, 1554 Litton Drive, Stone Mountain, GA 30083; Green Ronin Publishing, P.O. Box 1723, Renton, WA 98057-1723

Dear Editor,

I have just received my first issue of *Realms of Fantasy* and for the most part I am pleased with the magazine. However, there is one problem that I do want to point out. In your "Books" section you list the title of the book, the publisher, how many pages, the cost, and if it is hardcover or not. That's great, but it is missing an important piece, the ISBN number. I am incarcerated, and we do not always have the current "Books in Print" series, so it is not possible for me to get the ISBN number on new releases so I can order books through the mail. I am sure that I am not the only reader that would be interested in having these numbers listed with each book that you profile. Just a thought.

Edward Kranz

Thank you for telling us about the ISBN numbers. We'll make every effort to include them in future issues.

Dear Editor:

I thoroughly enjoyed Julie Czerneda's article on Luis Ryo in the December issue. I am a big Ryo fan and it was very enlightening to find out how a cover illustration comes into being. Art truly is a universal language!

Julie Gerrity
Los Angeles, California

Your letters are welcome. Send them to: Letters to the Editor, *Realms of Fantasy*, P.O. Box 527, Rumson, NJ 07760. Or, better yet, e-mail to: realmsoffantasy@aol.com.

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The Two Towers is a part of history for actors and audiences alike.

One year ago, anticipation was thick for the first film in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. While some Tolkien fans were anxious, others were downright hostile and bitter, particularly at the decision to cast Elijah Wood as Frodo Baggins, the hobbit who carries the fate of Middle-Earth in his hands. But on top of casting controversies, everyone wondered, would the script stay true to the novel? Would the movie match the way fans envisioned Tolkien's world? Considering the scope and grandeur of this epic story, was it possible at last for a trilogy of movies to be made that would live up to the written word?

As we now wait for the release of the trilogy's middle film, *The Two Towers*, a lot has happened. The first film, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, earned a total of 13 Academy Award nominations (including Best Picture) and won four Oscars, as well as critical acclaim. Worldwide, the film grossed more than \$860 million, making its \$109 million budget seem quite reasonable.

At press time, *The Fellowship of the Ring* ranks as the fifth most successful film in history.

"History" is a word that keeps cropping up among those involved in making the trilogy.

Take New Zealand actor Karl Urban, who plays Eomer. Urban says, "New Line definitely went out on a limb. It's never been attempted in the history of cinema before to completely fund and shoot three films simultaneously before you've even found out if the first film is a success or not, if you're going to actually recoup part or all of your investment. Personally, I didn't have any doubt whatsoever. I had a lot of faith in the material, in the people who were working on it, and in Peter Jackson. It was such a pleasure to be there and share in the excitement as it all began to unfold and all the accolades and positive feedback started to come in for Peter and the cast and the filmmakers."



Frodo (Elijah Wood) undergoes a darker journey in *The Two Towers* as possession of the ring begins to have an effect on him.

Elijah Wood, who found himself at the heart of controversy for being cast as Frodo Baggins, agrees. "More than anything, I loved the idea of being part of something special. I knew this was going to be special. That it was going to be remembered. This isn't some sort of adventure script that you read—it's something historical. I really wanted to be a part of that and to be a part of Peter Jackson's vision."

Wood had read *The Hobbit* when he was 12 years old and loved the book. But the only way he could read the script for *The Fellowship of the Ring* was to go to the casting office in Los Angeles—because the script was not allowed to leave the office. Wood had to read it on the spot. "I sat there for about two hours, and I was transported to another world," Wood says. "As I was driving home, I felt like I was still in that world." Wood laughs, remembering the moment. "I half expected to see orcs and elves running around outside; I was so consumed by it."

By that point, Wood was willing to do whatever it would take to land the role of Frodo. There was

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ABOVE: King Theoden (Bernard Hill) inspects the Roban troops alongside Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen). BELOW: Roban peasants watch as King Theoden and the Fellowship prepare for battle.



one problem: The filmmakers had their hearts set on casting an English actor, which meant Wood had to prove he could perform a convincing English accent. But when Wood was offered the chance to make an audition tape at the casting office, he turned it down. "I didn't think it was an environment conducive to really explaining the passion I have for the role and the project," Wood explains.

He knew he could prove to the filmmakers he was the best actor to play Frodo—but that required extra effort.

"I went out and got a book on hobbits so I could get a basic idea of their style of dress and artwork," Wood says. "I went to a costume shop and I got a costume, and I went into the woods with friends and filmed three scenes that they were using for Frodo auditions. That night I went to the Miramax offices and borrowed their Avid and edited it all together, went to their office the next day, and gave the video to the casting director. I put my

best foot forward that way. It ultimately worked out and was one of the most gratifying things of my life—going for something, believing in it, doing it my way, and having it pan out."

After landing the coveted role of Frodo, Wood was then faced with immediate backlash from Tolkien fans.

"They announced that I was going to be Frodo on AintItCoolNews.com, and I read the reactions to the announcement. I think almost 50 percent were really harsh—people saying, essentially, 'Kill me now. This could never work. The movie's ruined.'"

"I understood that people were very passionate. It's an important thing to stay true to an adaptation and stay true to the books and also win over people's expectations, because a book is a very personal experience. So I knew that going into it. I can relate to being that passionate about something and wanting to know what's happen-

ing to that thing that you love, and wanting it to turn out the way you want it to turn out. I certainly understood."

The second film promises to be bigger and grander than the first. Expect to see plenty of a CGI Gollum. Look also for a CGI Treebeard, plus thousands of computer-generated warriors in battle. MASSIVE, a computer program created specifically for *The Lord of the Rings*, gives computer-generated warriors their own brains. In other words, if a scene has thousands of CGI characters in battle, each character makes its own decisions about how it wants to fight.

The Two Towers also introduces the country of Rohan and several new characters, including King Theoden (played by Bernard Hill) and Eomer, Third Marshall of Riddemmark (played by Urfan).

In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, hobbit Frodo Baggins volunteers to take the most powerful ring in Middle-Earth to Mordor to destroy it—to destroy the ring is to destroy evil forever. He's accompanied by a fellowship of hobbits (Sam, Merry, and Pippin), the wizard Gandalf, the elf Legolas, the dwarf Gimli, and the men Aragorn and Boromir. When the first film ends, the fellowship is broken: Gandalf has fallen into the interior depths of the mountains mined by dwarves, and Boromir has been killed while trying to prevent Merry and Pippin from being kidnapped by the Orcs, under order of Saruman. Frodo and Sam have struck out on their own, knowing this is their best chance to deliver the ring to its destruction. Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli are left behind, knowing there's nothing they can do to help Frodo except look for his fellow hobbits.

The Two Towers follows the destiny of each group broken apart from the fellowship: Merry and Pippin as they struggle to break free from the Orcs; Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli, determined to find them; and Frodo and Sam as they make their way toward Mordor.

Wood describes Frodo's role in *The Two Towers*: "He sees Gollum in himself and the influence that the ring will have on him if he allows it."

"That's one of the things that makes *The Two Towers* so interesting, in terms of Frodo. That is what defines Frodo in this particular chapter of the story. The initial movie is about setting everybody off on the journey and getting Frodo to the point where he takes the ring on his own. But this movie really deals with the true influence that the ring has on Frodo. And having that really hit him hard when he almost sees a mirror image of himself in the future by seeing Gollum. It scares him. It petrifies him. Because he realizes then what this ring is capable of doing, and he could very well go in that direction."

"Gollum was once a hobbit, like himself. And he was ruined and destroyed and corrupted by this ring. Frodo's determined to know that he could somehow reverse that. That humanity of Gollum is still there. There's still hope for Gollum. Because if there's hope



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for Gollum, there's hope for Frodo. And that's a really interesting thing."

As Wood points out, *The Two Towers* is a darker journey for Frodo. "There's also a cross manipulation. That's interesting to see out of Frodo, because it shows that that's a part of the ring's influence. He meets Gollum, and Gollum obviously wants the ring. So Gollum takes Frodo because he wants the ring, and Frodo uses Gollum as his guide to get to Mordor, because he knows Gollum wants the ring. So they're manipulating each other. Frodo thinks he's got the upper hand because he's got the ring and he's manipulating this wretched creature to take him where he wants to go by using the ring as bait, but in reality Gollum is devising plans all along to create some sort of pitfall for Frodo so that Gollum then can have the ring. It's interesting. There's something very treacherous about that relationship."

Meanwhile, Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli enter Rohan, where they meet Eomer and King Theoden.

Although Bernard Hill also made his own audition tape—which he directed himself in a friend's barn—he was hesitant to consider going to New Zealand for a year. It took long conversations with Hill's agent, fellow actor Sean Bean (who plays Boromir), and the filmmakers before Hill agreed to accept the role of King Theoden. Once he arrived in New Zealand, he soon realized he'd made the right

decision.

"The hardest thing about the whole project was leaving New Zealand," Hill says. "I just loved it there. I didn't want it all to finish. None of us did. As tired as we were, we just wanted it to go on forever."

King Theoden plays a critical role as the story of *The Lord of the Rings* moves from the lands of hobbits, elves, and dwarves into Rohan, a country in the world of men. "Theoden goes through lots of things," Hill says about the character he plays. "He's grieving for his son. He feels guilty about his niece, whose parents have been killed by Orcs—he hasn't been a surrogate father or even indeed a respectable uncle. He's been an old man. So all those human emotions: that self-doubt, guilt, remorse, grief, jealousy, love, jealousy love—I think the audience will identify with him quite strongly."

"We're talking about a level of evil that the world of man has never come across before. So it's something he's not equipped to deal with. It needs the magical powers of Gandalf. It needs the broad spectrum of experience from Aragorn. It needs the consistency of the elf and the fierce fighting qualities of the dwarf to keep Theoden safe and on track until at some point he realizes it."

Another part of that equation is King Theoden's nephew, Eomer, played by Urban, whose experience includes several roles on *Xena: Warrior Princess* (ranging from Cupid

to Caesar), as well as the recent movie *Ghost Ship*. He'd just finished starring in a New Zealand movie, *The Price of Milk*, directed by Harry Sinclair—who happened to play Isildur in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. A friend of Peter Jackson, Sinclair showed *The Price of Milk* to him. "I think I was fortunate enough to be in Peter's face when he was looking for a young actor to cast in the role of Eomer," Urban says. "They called me up and invited me to play the role, and I didn't hesitate to say yes. I kind of flew under the radar a bit."

About the character he plays, Urban says, "Eomer is the nephew of King Theoden. His parents were killed at a very young age, and he's been adopted by Theoden, along with his sister, Eowyn. Eomer has grown up to become a fierce warrior, a defender of Rohan. I would imagine that would lead to a pretty arduous lifestyle, if you could imagine being on horseback for 10-odd hours a day, patrolling the borders of Rohan and defending the land from any invasion. He's a bright young man. He has enough insight to recognize that Saruman is no ally but is instead a very shrewd and dangerous enemy. He suspects that Wormtongue is working in conjunction with Saruman but cannot prove it. This leads to a division within the house of Theoden, who is obviously in a catatonic state, under the spell of Wormtongue and Saruman. There's almost a sense in Eomer of this immense frustration because of this inabil-

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ity to actually do anything about the situation without going directly against the King—he's still the King, he's just in a catatonic state.

"The movie differs somewhat from the book in that Eomer is not imprisoned, but Wormtongue manipulates Theoden into banishing him. Eomer leads a group of riders off to fight the Orcs, and that's when he bumps into Legolas and Aragorn and Gimli."

To successfully portray Eomer, Urban trained with various weapons. "The Rohan culture has a very powerful military basis, and that is its cavalry," Urban notes. "They have thousands of men on horseback that are fit and hardened riders with shields, swords, and spears."

"I remember the first day I was on set, I was receiving instruction from this old guy, and he was showing me a sequence of parries. Then he went off, and one of his assistants came up to continue training with me, and he said, 'Do you know who that was?' And I said no. He said, 'That was Bob Anderson. That was the guy who trained Errol Flynn.' And I said, 'Oh, really?' And I was like, OK, no big deal. He said, 'He was Darth Vader in the fight



Wormtongue (Brad Pitt), minion of Saurman, watches Eomer (Karl Urban), a Rohan warrior and nephew of King Theoden.

sequence! And I said, 'No! Get out of here! I just had a sword fight with Darth Vader? That's incredible! Now *that* I related to. That meant something to me!'

While Urban had ridden horses before, he took the task to heart in preparation for his role as Eomer. "I decided where I really wanted to base the foundation of Eomer was on horseback, because that's where he spends his whole life. I wanted to connect with that feeling and to connect with the animals, the

horses themselves. So I spent the better part of a month and a half, solidly, five days a week, doing up to two hours each day learning how to become an extremely efficient horseman. Learning how to control a horse with one hand so my other hand was free to wield a spear or sword; learning how to command a horse with just the most subtle change in posture. Coming up with that was one of the most rewarding elements in the whole shoot. One of the pleasures about my job is constantly having to acquire the skills for the characters I play, and horse riding—I just love it."

"Wherever possible, I always try to make it as complex as possible. We were shooting one

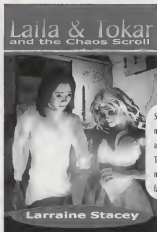
sequence where I was galloping along toward the camera, and I got my spear, and without looking at it, threw it in the air, so it was twirling. Fortunately, I caught it and then was able to heave it off and thrust it at my target. Working with Peter Jackson was such an amazing experience. I felt like I just wanted to do the absolute best I could. He had a way of bringing the best out in people. Everyone was pushing themselves to try to achieve something really worthwhile."

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Orc Gristmakh holds Pippin and Merry captive
while Frodo and Sam continue their journey.

Like Urban, Hill was already an experienced rider but decided it was time to improve his skills. "I upgraded myself as a rider," Hill says. "I became a horseman. I went riding a lot, doing tricks and routines that all the riders did to keep themselves fresh. You have to bring the horses up to battle speed, too. So I got involved in that. It took a couple of months. There were periods when I'd go four or five days a week. During periods when I wasn't doing anything, I'd just get up early in the morning and go riding. I'd spend the day at the stables—maybe not riding all the time, but being around the horses and doing some kind of stable work. Just getting myself into it all. And it paid off."

Hill sometimes joined other riders as they put the horses through their paces on the beach, all horses synchronized, side by side in step as they progressed from a walk to a trot to a canter to a full gallop. "Off you go, 15 to 18 people galloping down the beach, lined abreast. It's a thrilling experience just in itself."

Which brings us back to history. Hill knows about cinematic history—he portrayed the captain in *Titanic*, the movie that has grossed the most money, worldwide, in history. So what does Hill think about the upcoming release of *The Two Towers*?

"I'll beat my own record, I think," Hill says. "That's not such a grand boast, at all, really. Quite a few people, for one reason or another, mainly the older people, couldn't be bothered (to see *The Fellowship of the Ring* in theaters). And then they thought, 'Well, we'll watch it on DVD.' And now they're saying, 'There's no way I'm not going to see the second film. I'm going to the cinema to see it.' So all the people who missed out on the first one will go see the second one, plus all the people who saw the first one."

Regardless of whether the trilogy's middle film breaks any records, it will play a significant role in the most ambitious movie project to date. When you go to the theater and the lights dim, chances are you're not only about to watch *The Two Towers*. You are about to become part of history. **18**

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A fortune cookie imparts crumbs of wisdom and morsels of history.

You cannot suffer from too much knowledge.

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—fortune cookie (2002)

Good time for movie-going—

Fly TWA to Cairo.

—fortune cookie (1985)

What could be more innocuous than a fortune cookie? You eat a nice Chinese meal and then, before you tackle the complex math of how to divvy up the check, you have a little post-dinner entertainment, courtesy of a Chinese sage (well, at least in the old days when the slips of paper started with the pidgin phrase, "Confucius say"). These days you have chocolate-coated fortune cookies that add a little more American flavor to the dessert notion of the fortune. Novelty dealers now sell fortune cookies in little take-out boxes, and you can buy them filled with "adult" fortunes without ever having to eat the meal to which they are the crowning touch, but the fortune cookie occupies essentially the same place in American culture it always has.

My wife, Anne, has come up with her own superstitious ritual (which others might share) regarding the fortune one gets in the cookie. If you want it to come true, you must eat at least part of the cookie.

If you don't want it to come true, you must eat the paper fortune itself (much like a spy destroying a secret message). Who gets which cookie when they arrive at the table is another piece of folk ritual. Does each person take the cookie in closest proximity? Or does the host of the meal get to distribute them as he or she sees fit? Must we read them out loud to each other, or are they to remain a secret? Are the messages on those slips of paper purely for entertainment or are they for your edification (some of them now have a brief Chinese language lesson on the reverse side)? Are they an oracle, or are they merely sage advice (including the suggested lottery numbers)?

Perhaps it's better for an innocent consumer of Chinese food not to know the real history of the fortune cookie. After all, no one on the receiving end really takes the fortune

cookie seriously. But on the production end, it is serious business indeed. And from the point of view of the Chinese and Japanese American communities, the humble fortune cookie is a politically charged symbol that resonates with a long history of conflict between China and Japan.

Actually fortune cookies are not Chinese at all, even if that is their main association. They are an interesting example of the collision between folklore and fakelore—willfully manufactured folklore that traces a false origin. Fakelore, by the time it is exposed, has usually taken on the same status as authentic folklore, but knowing the true origins changes its meaning, often quite radically. For the humble fortune cookie, there is a history of Japanese and Chinese American contention, that might, at first, seem



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Fairy tales and myths contain many references to food and its relationship to power. Hansel and Gretel leave a trail of breadcrumbs in the woods and are nearly eaten by the witch in the gingerbread house.

no more than an inter-ethnic quibble easily solved by simply calling the fortune cookie an American invention. But the history of the fortune cookie's origins is tremendously important to the Chinese and Japanese American communities. It has to do with national and ethnic pride, and actually resonates with the troubled history of Chinese-Japanese relations since antiquity. It also has to do with more universally important things like the primal nature of eating and the underlying power dynamics of food service.

We learn early on, in elementary school, that the three basic needs are water, food, and shelter (sometimes, they are breathing, drinking, and eating—in that order—for the survival of the body). The need for things like sex, love, and meaning are secondary—at least to the immediate body. In anthropology, understanding the eating habits of a society—both for basic sustenance and for more elaborate ritual purposes—is one of the primary ways to gain cultural insight. The obtaining, preparing, distribution, and eating

of food are a fundamental part of a culture's infrastructure.

Our language is full of references to food (as are all others). We eat "crow" and "humble pie" when we are humiliated. The unreachable dream is "pie in the sky." We go "whole hog." We "can't stomach" things. Kitsch is "cheesy," nice people are "sweet," a failed romance can be "bittersweet." We listen to "corny" jokes and buy SUVs that turn out to be "lemons." We get the "flavor" of an argument, put "cheesecake" and "beefcake" on our walls, and are chastised: "You can't have your cake and eat it, too." Attractive things are "good enough to eat," and when we're being especially affectionate, we say, "I could just eat you up." (Women's names and endearments are particularly full of food references: Candy, Cookie, Sugar, Muffin, Pumpkin, Honey-pie, Sweetie.) On the other hand, negative things "leave a bad taste in your mouth." Left angry and frustrated, we "stew" in our own "juices." We rely on our "gut instincts," and we show extreme disapproval by saying

"don't make me puke."

Some anthropologists go as far as to argue that it is our particular way of eating that caused us to become human in the first place. In a co-authored essay in a recent issue of *Current Anthropology*, Richard Wrangham, James Holland Jones, Greg Laden, David Pilbeam, and Nancylou Conklin-Brittain put forth a radical new theory. They suggest that the discovery of cooking—shortly after the discovery of fire—not only occurred far earlier than generally believed, but that cooking led to changes in diet and eating habits that actually transformed the body and resulted in the development of the human form as we know it today.

According to Wrangham and his co-authors, the transition from australopithecines to homo erectus, the predecessor of modern-day humans, took place in an incredibly short period of 100,000 years—so quickly that there is no significant fossil record of the change. Because of cooking, there came radical changes in the diet of these early hominids, and those changes then affected the shape and size of teeth and the nature of the digestive tract, making both smaller and more streamlined. The most significant change was probably cultural. Since the preparation of food took time (during which the hunted and gathered foods could be stolen), the proto-humans developed various adaptive strategies that resulted in a surprising range of social and cultural features from sexiness to homes. Both the "cooking hypothesis" and the "teeth hypothesis"—which could conceivably explain everything from the size of human brains to the unique human menstrual cycle—are still speculative, but they illustrate how scientists view the connection between eating and being human as integral.

We don't have to turn the clock back quite so far to understand that changes in eating habits have profound effects. For example, anyone who's noticed the odd prominence of dialysis centers on Indian reservations knows that it is because the incidence of diabetes is more than eight times higher among Native Americans than in the general population. This is a direct result of the relatively sudden change from a "hunter-gatherer" or "forager" diet, characterized by rough vegetables and protein, to one in which processed grains and sugar, along with corn-fed meats, are the staples. The Native American metabolism simply did not have adequate time to adjust, and so the result is an unusual incidence of obesity and such a proliferation of diabetes that many Native Americans simply accept it as part of growing up.

Another example is the Irish potato famine, which devastated the country and contributed in a major way to Irish immigration to the United States. It was caused, in large part, by the fact that the Irish had changed their earlier diet to take advantage of the potato, which had been unknown in Europe until Conquistadors brought it back from the Andes

of the New World.

The culinary, political, and economical histories of various foodstuffs are, in very real ways, integral to the history of the world as we know it today. If one scratches the surface of the trade in sugar, coffee, and tea (and looks at the parallel and complementary history of drugs like tobacco and opium), one gets a crash course in global history, particularly of imperialism and colonialism.

In English, the terminology of eating also encodes within it a history of class dynamics. Food terms like "pork," "beef," and "mutton" are Norman words, while their Anglo-Saxon counterparts are the animal terms "pig," "cow," and "sheep." At the table, where we mind our manners, we use the language of the conqueror, whereas out in farmyard and the barn where we get sweaty and dirty, we use the language of the conquered.

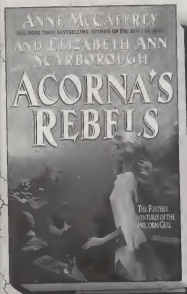
"Breaking bread together" is a sign of friendship, and to refuse to do so is a grave insult or an act of defiance. Most institutions are keenly aware of the importance of shared food, and that is why dining quarters remain segregated in the military and in business. Officers and "enlisted men" eat in separate mess halls; executives and salaried men have separate dining rooms (there's also the issue of the key to the executive wash room, but that's another topic). To be invited to "dinner with the boss" is a great honor. Most educational institutions maintain separate dining rooms for faculty, even if professors and teachers must endure the same serving lines as their students.

Folklore and mythology are also full of references to eating and power. Little Red Riding Hood begins with a basket of goodies for Grandmother and ends with a gruesome feast for the wolf (who is then cut open to release his meals intact). The wolf who eats two of the three little pigs gets tricked three times by the third pig, and in some versions of the tale ends up in the pig's cooking pot. Hansel and Gretel go to a gingerbread house, leaving a trail of bread crumbs, and are nearly eaten by the witch. The giant in "Jack and the Beanstalk" would grind the bones of the Englishman he smells to make his bread. It is a delicious-looking poisoned apple that puts Snow White to sleep.

Among nursery rhymes—one of the first ways in which we get our introduction to language—we discover an even greater preponderance of food images. Little Miss Muffet is eating curds and whey, Jack Sprat could eat no fat (his wife could eat no lean), Jack Horner gets a plum out of his Christmas pie, Simple Simon wants to taste some pie (though not the one from which the four-and-twenty blackbirds emerge), and the dish ran away with the spoon.

Mythology is full of references to eating, too numerous to catalogue here. A couple of prominent examples: The Olympian gods are able to take power because Zeus tricks his Titan father and survives his cannibalistic

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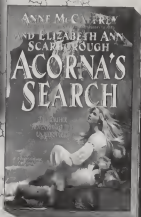


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The giant in "Jack and the Beanstalk" uses human bones to make his bread.

gorging on his own children. In the oldest surviving mythological text, Gilgamesh fails the test of the seven leaves in his quest to recover his lost friend, Enkidu.

Food is also associated with connection to other worlds. Eating a certain leaf enables one to understand the speech of animals, eating

faerie food can trap us in that realm (a sumptuous repast turns out to be maggots and human body parts when the enchantment is broken). In an East Asian tale a young man is warned not to touch the ground when he leaves the Heavenly Kingdom to visit his lonely mother; his undoing is the hot porridge

she serves him—although he tries to eat this last chance at his mother's cooking while astride his winged horse, he spills the porridge and is tossed to the ground by the startled animal, never to return to his fairy wife and children. An excellent literary example of eating and its link to the dark other world of imagination and the supernatural is Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market," suffused with luscious and erotic images of seduction and consumption.

The demonized "Other" is said to eat disgusting or inappropriate food. Feelings about appropriate eating behavior are so strong that they threatened the 1988 Summer Olympic Games, which were held in Seoul, Korea. Animal rights activists and loyal pet owners threatened to boycott the Summer Games because the Koreans made no secret of eating dog. To be called a "dog-eater" in most other cultures is usually a grave insult, as it suggests backwardness and poverty, but in Korea, dog happens to be eaten for its great "yang" value as an aphrodisiac and revitalizer by middle-aged men. To placate the concerned Olympic Committee, the Koreans removed mention of dog from restaurant menus and substituted the euphemism, "health soup." Many "health" food restaurants also moved out of the central Seoul to outlying resort areas.

The consumption of inappropriate or disgusting foods also has its odd entertainment



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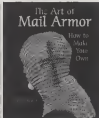
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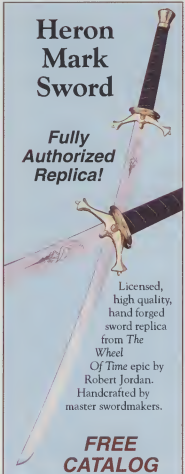
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value. Diplomats, politicians, anthropologists, and travelers all have their stories about eating things like monkey brains and grubs. If you want to be taken to the verge of nausea, have a look at the lowbrow hit, *Fear Factor*, which recently featured contestants having to eat water buffalo and elk penises while they tried to make each other throw up.

All significant major rituals in human culture, be they religious (e.g., taking the Host) or secular (the business meal), are linked in some way to the act of eating or its opposite, fasting. The only exception I could think of was a divorce, which doesn't have any ritual meal connected to it, but which one might celebrate with a stiff drink. Eating is a way to participate physically in the construction of meaning.

The next time you go to an ethnic restaurant, consider how it is a "safe" way to interact with another culture. The Other presents you with exotic and nonthreatening things that you can consume. The Other is eager to please, because your business is important ("the customer is always right"). The very act of eating at a restaurant asserts economic and social power; for the ethnic restaurateur, to provide food from the old country to people of the new country is a way to participate in the "melting pot," to make money, to achieve a happier life. And therefore it is no surprise that the server would want the consumers to be pleased with the dining experience, adding small touches that might amuse them but also perhaps lead them to believe that they leave the table knowing something more about the server's language and culture. A perfect remedy to imperialism?

It is actually rather complicated, when you think about it, because sometimes the power dynamics are harder to figure out. A working-class couple might dress up and dine at a posh French restaurant only to be sneered at by the waiter, who sees through them because they don't know which is the salad fork. Ignorance of food customs is one of the first giveaways of one's class background, and dramatizing such discomfort is one of the stocks of comedy (consider *Pretty Woman* and *The Princess Diaries*, which both use such a premise in major scenes).

Not knowing how to use chopsticks is another one of those awkward and potentially comical conditions, but Chinese restaurants are accommodating—they will always have a fork for you, and when you have survived the meal, that nice fortune cookie arrives.

If you look in an encyclopedia of food or a history of food, the fortune cookie is generally said to have been invented by David Jung of the Hong Kong Noodle Company in Los Angeles in 1918, thereby making it a Chinese American invention. But a little extra research will unearth a very interesting debate.

As one would expect, Chinatown Online and the Chinese Historical and Cultural Project (also accessible online) both promote the Chinese American origin of the fortune

cookie. They refer to the story of how, in the 14th century, the Chinese hid secret messages in "moon cakes" (a ritual food eaten during the Moon Festival) to foil detection by the invading Mongols.

Some digging into Chinese folklore shows that the hero of this story is one Yuan Chang, who disguised himself as a Taoist priest and distributed the ingenious moon cakes to the walled cities in various parts of China. The hidden messages announced the date and instructions for a revolution against the Mongols. The Mongols, for some reason, did not like lotus nut paste, which was the stuffing in the moon cakes, and this simple culinary distaste made them oblivious to the plans for the general uprising that finally ousted them and gave rise to the Ming Dynasty. It is said that the practice of hiding good wishes in cakes became a custom afterwards.

From the Web site of Sci Tech, "the major manufacturer of fully automated fortune cookie machines worldwide since 1980," we learn the following: "The origins of the Fortune Cookie as we know it today were laid down by the Chinese 49'ers who worked on the building of the great American railways through the Sierra Nevada into California. Work was very hard and pleasures were few in isolated camps; those hard workers had only biscuits with happy messages inside to exchange at the Moon Festival instead of traditional cakes with happy messages, thus the FORTUNE COOKIE was born. This became something of a cottage industry and as the Chinese settled in San Francisco after the railway and the Gold boom the custom continued."

Another version of this story is that prisoners during the Tang Dynasty smuggled messages outside by hiding notes in their food. (This particular tale seems unlikely unless those prisoners had too much to eat. It is probably a corruption of the Yuan Chang story above—quite a contrast to the American cliché of smuggling files into prison inside a birthday cake.)

Chinese Americans have even tried to make David Jung into a kind of folk hero, claiming that he invented the fortune cookie as a way to lift the spirits of the unemployed men of Los Angeles, but the real credit is due farther north. Chris Dichtel, a volunteer historical tour guide at Golden Gate Park, notes: "The generally-accepted origins of the fortune cookie, which is most definitely not Chinese, are that it originated at the Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. The designer of (and inhabitant of, until WWII internment) the Japanese Tea Garden was Makoto Hagiwara, and it was he who is alleged to have introduced the fortune cookie in 1914 at the Tea Garden." Dichtel also mentions the court ruling, which Alexandria Abramian describes in a 1999 issue of *Hemispheres* magazine: "It wasn't until 1983 that the multiple 'founders' of fortune cookies finally had their say in a San Francisco courtroom. By that time, many others had jumped

into the fray, and an exhaustive hearing ensued before San Francisco was ultimately ruled as the homeland of fortune cookies."

This is corroborated by one of Hagiwara's own descendants, Erik Sumiharu Hagiwara-Nagata, who writes, "The fortune cookie ... was introduced as refreshment to be taken while strolling in the Japanese Tea Garden by my great, great grandfather.... This confection is a very old folk art long known in Japan as 'tsuji ura sembei' and is associated with New Year festivities at Shinto Shrines.... The confection, as it is known in Japan, is not sweet. The sweetening of it was done to suit American tastes. Our baker used to make it for consumption in the Garden. This novel idea of receiving a fortune in a light sembei cookie is known throughout Japan and has been known there for many generations. (It was/is a felicitous thing to receive a good luck fortune on the New Year from a local Shrine.) As my family was not business oriented, there was never a patent taken out on the fortune cookie in any form.... During WWII, local Chinese usurped the idea and began to market it as their own. (The recipe is very simple.) I have met several individuals from Japan researching the fortune cookie and they are bewildered as to why it is known as Chinese in the U.S."

So it seems the humble fortune cookie is a product of large historical forces—local Chinese taking advantage of the Japanese internment during World War II. But the pattern is even older, since the Japanese have long inherited or borrowed culture and art from the Chinese (Buddhism, poetry, ceramics, and even language, to name a few), turning it into their own unique expression. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Japanese imitations of Chinese ceramics were re-imitated and mass produced by the Chinese, causing much headache for art historians and anthropologists. In a typically American twist, one of the underlying issues of the fortune cookie's origin had to do with money, since its "owner" could be making millions in licensing. But the fortune cookie is public domain, and I like to think of its gracing our palates as a cosmological lesson.

The ancient Chinese thought of the cosmos as a giant circle, and at its very center was a square that represented the "Middle Kingdom." This is the symbolism of the Chinese coin, which has a square hole in its middle (the same coin that was often hidden as a surprise inside dumplings). Mr. Hagiwara's cookie presents a unique twist on the Chinese model, and anticipates the "torus" model of the universe, which comes from contemporary astrophysics. He takes the flat disk of the sembei wafer and rolls it into a partial cylinder, then draws the two ends together into a torus made of a disk. This is an illustration of the origami universe, the implicate order hidden within the explicate world of the senses. To eat it, to perceive it with more than our eyes, is—*ah*—sweet. And inside its illusory surface, you find a bit of trickster wisdom. *~*



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Chilling horror and weird fantasy find a home in two new anthologies.

Along with anybody else who has, through the passing years, fallen prey to the addictive condition of being unable to resist taking out or browsing through or borrowing or even actually buying any intriguing-looking collection of spooky stories they come across, I have a good number of times encountered and marveled at the very small number of Vernon Lee's marvelous short stories one finds collected and then recollected in such books, most commonly the tale called "Amour Dure," of which more later.

Up until now this has been the full extent of my contact with Lee's work because, though my addiction did briefly extend into my actually becoming an anthologist twice, it was fortunately nipped in the bud because I found the meticulous fussing needed to acquire rights and permissions tended to give me tics, and that I was unable to deal calmly with the peevishness and obvious paranoia of authors I was unselfishly trying to help—the strangest thing about this last problem being that the irritating complaints of those authors were identical to the reasonable requests and queries I myself had sent to editors in the past!—and so my addiction never developed into full-blown, totally compulsive anthologizing such as presently, to our great good fortune, afflicts David G. Rowlands, who has (may he be blessed forever) assembled *Hauntings* (Ash-Tree Press, Ashcroft, BC, Canada; hardcover, 370 pp. \$50.00), a wonderful collection of Vernon Lee's fantastic writings and her essays on such writings, along with an excellent introduction by Rowlands to all these treasures and a fine essay on Lee by Irene Cooper Willis.

It is one of the richest and most gorgeous collections of weird fantasy I have ever had the good fortune to come across, and I think it establishes Lee to be (as Rowlands' introduction points out was noted by dear, weird, old Montague Summers in his *The Supernatural Omnibus*) a peer of the greatest of the greats in fantastic literature, Montague Rhodes James and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu included!

Putting it simply into a very sincere one-line review, I am delighted to say, without any exaggeration whatsoever, that *Hauntings* blew me away. This is a wonderful book.

I can see why "Amour Dure" is the tale most often culled by the anthologists, as it is probably Lee's best work. It presents itself as excerpts from the diary of Spiridon Trepka, a young Polish scholar visiting the ancient "towered and battlemented" town of Urbania, perched high upon the Italian Apennines. Its first concerns his slow uncovering of the sensationally evil historical doings of the Duchess Medea da Capri during the mid-1500s, becomes preoccupied with his profound fascination with this Borgia-like figure, and then slowly and tremulously begins to hint at an unnatural and frightening contemporary connection between himself and this sensationally dangerous woman.

Skillfully—I think it's perfectly fair to say, hypnotically—the story pulls the reader deeper into the past and poor Spiridon's deepening confusion as he stumbles across or is guided to a series of ever more fascinating and alluring paintings of the beautiful but horrid Duchess, and finally discovers the most irre-

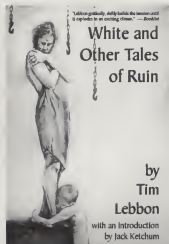


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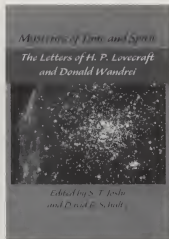
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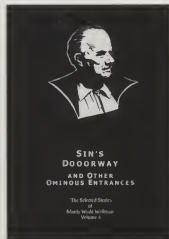
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sistible of them all which he describes with a lover's attention to small details lovingly observed: "short, fleece-like, yellowish-red curls; the same beautifully curved eyebrows, just barely marked; the same eyelids, a little tight across the eyes; the same lips, a little tight across the mouth," and when, with awed delight, he quotes a chilling device inscribed on the golden collar hanging round her marble-white throat ("Amour dure—Dure amour") we know the poor fellow is past all saving.

But then again it may not be the best or, at the very least, it has some wonderfully strong contenders. "A Wicked Voice," for instance, wherein the victim is entranced to an awful, subtle destruction by the sound of singing; or the gorgeous and terribly touching "Prince Alberic and the Snake Lady," which does extraordinary and lastingly disturbing things to fairy tale notions; or "Marsyas in Flanders," which toys in a highly original manner with a churchly mystery of the sort so beloved by M.R. James, and then ends it, without in any way destroying the deep spookiness of it all, with a very funny punch line.

The truth is these are all marvelous stories, every one of them, and I intend to read through the whole lot of them shortly once I've rested up from satisfying this magazine deadline as I know I've missed a lot of what they've got to say from the way bits and pieces of them keep floating up in my mind unexpectedly to startle me with yet another new revelation.

There are also two very interesting essays, one of which ("Faustus and Helena: The Supernatural in Art") was of particular interest to me since it has some highly challenging things to say about illustrating fantastic fiction (particularly to a part-time illustrator of fantastic fiction such as myself) and, once again, I believe I'll be paying that one a considerable number of future visits wherein I'll hopefully be able to refute some of her implications a little better than I did the first time around.

I am delighted to have the chance to announce the arrival of **Things That Never Happen** (Night Shade Books, San Francisco and Portland; 449 pp.; trade hardcover \$27.00; trade paperback \$15.00; signed, slipcased limited edition \$60.00), a well-chosen collection of the stories of M. John Harrison, as I do believe he is one of the strongest and most

convincing of the new wave of writers of fantastic fiction who are presently giving many of the genre's most established automatic reflexes and beloved presumptions a much-needed and refreshing shaking up and series of whacks on the side of the head.

The book is both a delightful introduction to his art and a marvelous demonstration of a really strong talent feeling its way into an exploration of this marvelous area of literature which I am sure—barring Mr. Harrison getting fatally plowed down by some dingy, out-of-control lorry—is a long way from being finished.

Not only are the stories well chosen, but they are accompanied by a straight-from-the-shoulder introduction by the author and equally direct, extremely enlightening non-nonsense story notes at the end. As an additional bonus, there is also a witty and extremely helpful essay on Harrison's work

by China Miéville. Hard to imagine a better starter kit on MJH.

The stories take place in a Britain which is profoundly gritty and grim. The people in them tend to be very hard-pressed financially and emotionally and are not uncommonly seriously ill (in his notes at the end, Harrison admits to being a little puzzled by the way sick women keep popping up in his stories); they live in very badly managed dwellings with dismal interiors which the author is as uniquely adept in convincingly describing as he is in depicting the crushing bleakness in his landscapes, both urban and pastoral.

All of this tends to make a recurrent escapist tendency in his characters extremely understandable; it ensures that the reader will have no problem in deeply sympathizing with their pathetic attempts at flight from such a dismal and pointless and basically unconvincing reality even though they may be transparently

Jane Yolen Is Reading ...

Being a classic multitasker, like most women, like most consummate readers, I am usually reading several books at once. I have a bedtime book, a bathroom book, and a sofa book all going at the same time.

This week I read Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*, Alice Hoffman's *Blue Diary*, and *Moby Dick*. On the face of it, they seem to have nothing in common: not genre, not age appropriateness, not date of composition, not theme, not size of book. Nothing except the fact of their reader, me.

Coraline is a horror book for middle-grade readers, with a child in jeopardy in a house with dark corridors, doors that open onto things one would rather not see, alternate mothers with shoe-button eyes, and rats. It is a slim, compelling, not-at-midnight read.

Blue Diary is a mystery novel cum romance which doubles back on itself until the reader realizes it is a book of psychological revelations, a classic long-airplane-ride kind of book.

And *Moby Dick* is ... well, *Moby Dick*.

So what can they possibly have in common besides me?

Each is by a favorite author of mine. Gaiman I first met as a friend of Diana Wynne Jones (which is a recommendation in itself). His comic books about Sandman are neither comic nor books but rather inventive and brilliant storytelling. Hoffman has never failed to engage me—except for one misstep in *Here On Earth* where she puts *Wuthering Heights* in the 20th century and thus proves that it is simply a tale of a brutalizing sociopathy that only works in 19th-century clothes on an English moor. And Melville—whose *Billy Budd* and *Moby Dick* I reread every 10 years (forget the rest, really!)—is the granddaddy of great epic sea storytellers.

More than that, each book is a page turner, full of rounded characters, bigger than life situations, some magical or mystical revelations, and (my absolute bottom-line demand) munchy prose.



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wrong headed and feckless.

Harrison does many marvelous and amazing things by combining the notions that the real world seems illogical if not ridiculous to the point of being unreal if it is steadily gazed upon for an extended period of time, together with the strong likelihood that if any Oz is somehow achieved there is a great and terrible danger that our being there will take away its magic. The famous "wherever you go there you are" syndrome.

And though China Miéville's excellent essay on the author stresses the important point that the thing which divides the author from a large number of other philosophical fantasy writers is that Harrison is not a religious visionary but a secular one, I do believe another basic notion about Lands-Over-the-Rainbow which looms so very prominently in his stories—the absolutely horrible idea that if this world is so bloody silly and stupid what's to stop any other fled to from being more of the same?—is really a prime notion of Buddhism (and one of its most useful chain breakers) revisited: "Form is emptiness and emptiness is form."

All well and good, but we must not forget the important point that, whatever their insightful underpinnings, Harrison's stories are marvelously entertaining.

"Egnaro" is a fine example of his work. The narrator is an accountant, which is a nice touch. His narrators are often people trying to

help the spinning main characters who have fallen into some mad quest, and this main character is Lucas, the wretched proprietor of one of those marginal, rundown stores dealing in science fiction, occult books, and pornography (you may even be familiar with such a place) who keeps coming across wispy, furtive hints from odd stories buried in newspapers, bits of conversations overheard at bus stops, and other puzzling clues that have convinced him that there is both somewhere he can escape to (Egnaro) if only he can find some way in, and that there is also a huge plot afoot to keep him from finding it.

He disapproves of his varied clientele and wonders why the police occasionally confiscate the material from his pornography section but leave the science fiction shelves be.

"It all seems the same to me," he maintains. "Comfort and dreams. It all rots your brain." Then, reflectively: "Give them what they want and take the money."

The narrator ponders this and other unkind things said and eventually comes to the conclusion that "Lucas's contempt for them stemmed from his fellow feeling."

Pretty marvelous stuff, no?

It's safe to say everything in the book is lovely, but there are a few titles I'd like to stress just in case you want to browse before you buy: "The Incalling" is a very scary, multileveled exploration of the profound reciprocal damage done between mediums and their

clients; "A Young Man's Visit to London" is perhaps the deepest plumbing of the Land-Over-the-Rainbow problem just cited; "The East" is its companion piece; and "Science and the Arts" is appropriately the final story in the anthology because it unabashedly reveals the intelligent and profound compassion that has supported and inspired all that's gone before.

But you should really read every story.

Some time ago, I honestly cannot remember just when it was, I read/saw Eric Drooker's *Flood!* and was fortunate enough to have a forum, I honestly cannot remember whether it was here or elsewhere, allowing me to say how much I liked it.

Now Drooker has come out with the graphic novel (I'm really not crazy about that term but have never been able to come up with anything better) *Blood Song: A Silent Ballad* (A Harvest Original, Harcourt, Inc., New York, trade paperback, \$20.00) and I am very pleased to be able to help spread the word about it in turn.

It is obvious that Drooker has not wasted his time during the interim. He has clearly further honed his skills and deepened the subtlety of his technique, and the result is that *Blood Song* is even better than *Flood!*, which is saying a good deal.

Like its predecessor, *Blood Song* is a highly charged political statement. It starts by showing us an idyllic vision of a small village of thatched houses on stilts inhabited by a

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peaceful race of fisher folk and rice growers, then centers on a beautiful young woman and her dog.

A fundamental element of the book's design is that the paintings illustrating it (another problem with graphic novels is that calling the drawings in them "illustrations" is obviously incorrect, but let it pass ... let it pass) are rendered in photograph-like blacks and blues with bluish tones, except when the artist wants us to particularly notice or be startled or moved by some particular element (often signaling a profound change coming in the black-and-white world), which he renders in brilliant color. When the young girl, for instance, discovers she is having her first menstrual period—which turns out to be a great omen of change in the greater black-and-white world as well—the blood is bright red; when a tropical bird appears to lure the barking dog and lead him and the girl to the night turning in the jungle, it is done in startling greens and yellows and jazz from a saxophone or a moving sidewalk speech curl upward in flaming oranges.

I will not be specific because I don't want in any way to reduce the book's well-calculated shocks and surprising turns, but I can assure you there are plenty of them and that they will come back to you again and again after you've seen them exactly as some particularly well-worked sequence in a movie does.

There's a lot of raw anger in the book, but it's generated by compassion and the whole of it is a fine demonstration of how really magical and alchemical the artistic process is.

Also, it's very encouraging that such a book exists and is openly for sale and that you can buy it!

Gahan Wilson

The Lady of the Sorrows, Cecilia Dart-Thornton, Warner Aspect, NY, hardcover, 461 pp., \$24.95.

The Ill-Made Mute (2001), Cecilia Dart-Thornton's remarkable first novel, was widely hailed as the work of a major new talent. Now comes the sequel, *The Lady of the Sorrows*, in which Dart-Thornton's plucky young heroine, Imrhien, opposed by malevolent eldritch powers, continues her quest through the beautiful and perilous lands of Erith to reclaim her stolen memories and discover her true identity and purpose. (Readers should know that I am among those to whom *The Ill-Made Mute* is dedicated; while I don't believe this circumstance should prohibit me from reviewing her subsequent work, I do think it needs to be disclosed.)

Aside from the richness of Dart-Thornton's prose, three things distinguished *Mute* from the glut of run-of-the-mill fantasies, and the same qualities set *Lady* apart. First is the author's encyclopedic knowledge of folklore and fairy tales, knowledge that is never paraded pedantically but is instead

woven with nimble flair into an irresistible tapestry of setting, action, and character.

Second is her uncanny ability to tap into what is most vibrant and alive in her sources, making her borrowings seem like the natural flowerings of her fantastic world. The author accomplishes this by a stroke of genius: Her conceit, rigorously extrapolated through its manifold magical, cultural, and psychological ramifications, is to imagine a world in which the supernatural beings and events of European fairy tales and folklore are the stuff of common, everyday life. The result is that Erith and its inhabitants—human, seelie, and unseelie—are imbued with a striking combination of earthy and eerie qualities.

The third distinctive attribute of Dart-Thornton's work is the first-rate imagination behind it; not content simply to mine her sources, she contributes numerous wonders of her own. My favorite is the Shang storm, composed of winds that capture the actions of human beings at moments of intense emotion and impress them into the very air. Whenever the Shang winds blow, images flicker into view like ghosts, soundlessly replaying old tragedies and triumphs long after the original actors are dead and forgotten.

At the beginning of *Mute*, Imrhien had no memory, had lost the faculty of speech, and had been disfigured by a poisonous plant. By the end of that book, her disfigurement was cured and her voice restored, but her memory remained lost to her. The Imrhien of *Lady*, possessing beauty and speech, is a very different character, revealed to be more ordinary—or less uncanny, rather—than her misfortunes had made her seem. Readers get to know her all over again as she pursues her two main goals: first, to recover her missing memory, and second, to find the mysterious ranger, Thorn, who rescued her in *Mute* and with whom she has fallen deeply in love.

The two quests are not equal. Dart-Thornton has a tendency, in the Thorn material, to stray into the treacherous gardens of genre romance. When Imrhien, who has important information to deliver to the King-Emperor, gains access to the royal court by posing as a noblewoman from the Sorrow Islands, this unfortunate tendency reaches its apogee. But readers who persevere will be amply rewarded once Imrhien embarks in earnest on her search for memory and identity. What she finds changes her understanding (and ours) of all that has gone before, and points to a looming confrontation with powerful unseelie forces—a confrontation that seems likely to decide not only her own survival, but that of all humans on Erith. While *The Lady of the Sorrows* suffers somewhat from the falling-off that often afflicts the middle books of trilogies—and, in places, from an oversaturated romantic sensibility—its strong finish

and cumulative impact more than redeem the dazzling promise of its predecessor. This is a classic in the making.

The Scar, China Miéville, Del Rey, NY, trade paperback, 638 pp., \$18.95.

Where Dart-Thornton returns to the roots of epic fantasy to reinvigorate a moribund genre, yet is content to remain within its insular boundaries, China Miéville loots the traditions of a multitude of genres to explode boundaries, confound expectations and, out of the ensuing chaos, create an extraordinary hybrid—at once beautiful and grotesque, violent and lyrical—that is far more than the sum of its parts.

Miéville's breakthrough novel was *Perdido Street Station* (2000), which won the 2001 Arthur C. Clarke and British Fantasy awards. *The Scar*, while not precisely a sequel, is set in the same world: a darkly protean place in which modernist technology bleeds into ancient magic and vice versa, and human beings are but one of many intelligent species—such as khepri, whose females bear insectoid heads upon humanoid bodies, and cactaceae, who resemble animated saguaro cacti. In both novels, Miéville brings these creatures to life in all their strangeness, investing them with emotions and desires that may not be precisely human but which are susceptible to the empathy of human readers. This is especially true of the Remade: victims of the city of New Crobuzon's harsh and arbitrary justice system which, not satisfied with making the punishment fit the crime, remakes the criminal to fit the punishment through selective amputations and perverse graftings of plant, animal, and machine. Miéville's affection for these monstrosities is manifest, yet he does not degrade the tragedy of what they have suffered, nor the dignity they nevertheless possess, by making them pathetic symbols or objects of sadistic voyeurism. Whether psychologically or physically or both, all Miéville's characters, human and otherwise, are Remade, and his obsessive fascination with blurring the lines of form and function—a fascination that extends from the sexuality of individuals to the architecture of the cities they inhabit—is what shapes (and mishapes) his style as a writer and gives his work its undeniable power to seduce, disturb, disgust and, yes, uplift.

The Scar, set after the events of *Perdido Street*, is an even better book ... but also a chillier one. Miéville's plotting has improved, and so has the skill with which he weaves action and metaphor together in support of his chosen themes. The book's title, apart from describing a geographic location and parapsychological phenomenon of central importance to the plot, alludes to the most pervasive of these: the ways that love, in its endless permutations, remakes individuals and the world through recurrent cycles

Continued on page 87

Aliens!

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FABLE FROM A CAGE

A FABLE, BY ITS NATURE, HAS
TO HAVE A MORAL, DOESN'T IT?
NO ONE EVER SAID IT HAD TO
BE A GOOD MORAL, THOUGH.

*Let me tell you a little fable, a story I crafted while sitting inside this
dangled cage, where the rooks shit on me and steal my bread all day,
and the smoke from your town fires stings my eyes all night.
Did you know the owls feed me? They bring me rats, mice, squirrels, and I
eat them. That's why I haven't died yet. I'll never die, not here, wait all you like.*

BY TIM PRATT • ILLUSTRATION BY LORI KOEFÖRD

Once there was a thief who wandered in this country, passing from valley to valley in the night, loosening the ropes on cows and leading them away to sell in another town. He lifted bags of fruit from wagons, he picked up things that others put down. He was not a brigand, understand—he did not knock down defenseless women, he did not swagger with a looted sword on his hip, he did not terrorize the roads; indeed, he traveled *between* the roads more than on them. His crimes were all crimes of opportunity, but for an observant man, there are many opportunities for crime.

Not a brigand, no, but also nothing so grand as a burglar or a master thief. For there are men who can be like artists of the criminal trades, and this thief had known such men, but he did not compare to them. His was a lonely life, always running from one village to another, and he wondered sometimes how he had come to live in such a way—he, who had been born in the city.

Oh, yes, the city, you greedy little shits, look how your eyes widen and the drool falls from your lips. This thief had been born in the city, son of a banker, and he might have had a nice life there if he hadn't dallied with the daughter of a ship's captain ... but that is a different story, and not a fable at all—not a moral tale, in any sense, my young ones.

So this thief—who had a fine, black beard, his one vanity, a beard as fine as mine was before this month without trimming—had fallen on hard times. He was down to his last coins, and his fine clothes (lifted from a tailor's shop, and almost exactly the right size) were stained from trying to steal a pig the night before, an act below even his usual flexible standards.



He was musing on what to do next, for he had decided that three years traveling this way was more than enough, but he felt too old to apprentice himself to a trade. Indeed, he knew himself well enough to know that the moment his master smith or cooper turned his back, he would feel compelled to snatch up his tools and run away, as much from boredom as from habit.

Walking through the forest that day in a dour mood, he caught his foot on a root and went sprawling. The fall knocked the wind from him, and he lay gasping on the forest floor. Because he could not do otherwise, he stared before him ... and noticed a large, golden bracelet in the dirt.

The thief sat up, smiling, for here was the perfect crime of opportunity, a bit of jewelry dropped by some passerby, which would not be missed, and which would enrich him. He reached down, wrapped his fingers around the gold, and tried to pick it up.

It moved a little, but something held it fast. The thief brushed the dirt away around the ring and found half of it sealed in black metal. He brushed away more dirt, curious now, and cleared a square of metal three feet to a side. The ring was no bracelet, but a handle for this trapdoor. The handle wasn't really gold, either—just brass.

The thief hesitated. He'd heard the stories, of course, of hidgards with secret treasure troves in the forest, where they kept their choicest things. Had he found such a place? And if so, did someone keep guard and watch over it?

Ah, but the opportunity. How could he walk away from such a rich possibility?

The thief wrapped his fingers tight around the ring and pulled. The door moved with surprising ease, without so much as a squeal of hinges. A great cloud of dust rose up with the trapdoor, and the thief turned his face away and coughed, his eyes watering. He let the trapdoor fall back, revealing a black square of darkness.

The thief got down on his knees and peered in, wishing for a lantern. There was no ladder and no steps—did the brig and king lower himself down with ropes suspended from the treetops?

Something shoved him from behind. The thief screamed as he fell—the brigand king had come upon him, and now he would die, sealed in with the dusty old treasures!

He hit the ground quickly, far sooner than he'd expected—and it wasn't ground at all, but a pile of soft fabric, furs and silks. A bit dusty, but more than enough to break his fall. Should he pretend to be dead? He turned over slowly, reasoning that since he'd been unable to see the bottom of the shaft from above, whoever had pushed him would be similarly blind. He peered up at the square of sky and branches, and saw no one. He sat up gingerly, but found no injuries or pains.

He sat waiting for a few moments, expecting a face to appear above, or a voice to call out, or—worst of all—for the trapdoor to swing shut, sealing him in irrevocably, leaving his spirit to guard this pile of fabrics and whatever other treasures lay in the darkness.

Something hissed, like a spitting cat, and the thief shrieked.

Then he saw light. The hiss had been the sound of an oil-soaked wick igniting.

Someone was here with him.

He could see the lantern, a glass-sided, intricate thing, fit for a rich

man's house. It sat on a marble pedestal, like the hacked-off base of a column. He saw no one near the lantern.

"I saw the trapdoor," he began. "I found it by accident, and, well—just natural curiosity, you understand—I wanted to see what was underneath. I mean no harm—"

"You're a thief," a low, neutral voice said. It came from a place in the cavern far from the lamplight.

The thief turned his head that way, startled. "Oh, no, I'm just a journeyman carpenter and—"

"A thief, and a liar." There was satisfaction in the voice now. The only ones who ever sounded satisfied about finding a thief were people who planned to kill or beat that thief very badly.

"I have need of a thief," the voice said, and then a figure stepped into the lantern light

It was a woman.

Stop your titling, snot-noses. This isn't a bawdy tale; you'll have to lurk under the tavern windows to hear one of those. No, she wasn't a beautiful woman. She looked like all your mothers, I'd wager, gray in her hair, lines in her face, a good sturdy build. Not a beauty. Not like that ship captain's daughter who got our thief in so much trouble. Not at all.

The woman was dressed incongruously in a fine fur coat. "You must be hungry," she said. "Would you like something to eat? I have some meat roasting."

"I didn't mean to—to fall into your ... home," the thief said. "If you'll show me a way out, I'll be going."

"It's not a home, thief. It's a burial chamber, like the men in the desert are reputed to build—that's the joke, I think. A cavern filled with all the things I'd need to live well, after death. Fine dishes, fine silks, lanterns, pots, tools. All I've lacked is servants." She smiled. "At least, until you arrived. And you want to leave? If I'd wanted you to get out, thief, why would I have shoved you *in*?" Her eyes were no particular color, it seemed to him, perhaps the gray of dirty wash-water, but she stared at him, not smiling at all now.

"Ah," he said. "You pushed me, you say."

"You opened the door to my prison, thief. I wanted to thank you properly, and I couldn't do that with you up there." She held up her arms, her sleeves falling away to reveal her forearms, which were covered with scars. "I have hands of air and fire. I can touch things far away."

The thief's obsession with opportunity extended to his words as well. He never knew when to keep silent, and he said, "It seems to me that if you could push me into the hole from down here, you could have lifted that trapdoor yourself, and there'd be no need for thanks. Not that I don't appreciate your hospitality."

"It seems to me that a prison with a door that opens from the inside is no prison at all."

"Prisons are usually more secure than that," the thief agreed. He had some experience in such matters. "But they don't usually open for the casual passerby, either."

"You are not a casual passerby. You are the thief I've been waiting for. No one else would even have seen the door, but you...you were meant to find me."

"I'm sure I don't—"

ASK YOUR MOTHERS
AND FATHERS IF YOU
DON'T BELIEVE ME, OR
YOUR GRANDPARENTS.
I WAGER THEY'LL
TELL YOU THEY USED
TO LIVE IN PLEASANTER
TIMES, THAT PEOPLE
WEREN'T ALWAYS
SO TREACHEROUS
AND CRUEL.

"Shut up," she said sharply, and then took a deep breath. "I offered you food, before. You smell like pigshit, but not roast pork, so I assume you had a wrestling match with dinner and dinner won. Eat with me, thief."

As he was hungry, and trapped anyway, he nodded. "I'd be most pleased."

"You have odd manners for a thief." She turned, reaching into the darkness, doing things with her hands that the thief could not see.

"I have not always claimed that occupation. There was a time when I supped at tables, not in caverns underground."

She shoved a platter toward him. Several large, green leaves sat in the center, covering something. "What's this?" he said, lifting a leaf away.

The glassy eyes of a dead owl stared up at him, and the thief turned his head away in disgust. The bird's head was twisted completely around, its neck broken. "Good Lord, woman, are you mad?"

"You'd better hope I'm not mad," she said, her voice low again, and serious. "Because if I'm mad, you're going to eat that owl—beak, feathers, and all—on a madwoman's whim, and have nothing to show for it but stomach cramps and shit that cuts you."

She was serious, the thief could tell. "And if you're not mad?"

"Then after you eat that owl we'll get out of this hole, thief, and we will steal something grand."

"I can't," he said, looking at the dead bird. It was *buge*—even plucked and beheaded and cooked he couldn't have eaten it all. "I'm sorry, I don't know why you ask this of me, but I can't."

Something tightened around his throat: like blunt, flat fingers, cutting off his air. He choked and clawed at his throat, but his fingers touched only his own skin.

"Eat it, or die," she said.

He gasped his agreement—he had little choice. The invisible fingers loosened, and the thief rubbed his throat. "Can I have a knife at least?" he asked, dismayed by the roughness of his voice.

"Of course," she said, and tossed a blade onto the furs beside him. He'd expected a jeweled dagger, but this was a working man's knife, serrated on one side, sharp on the other, with a stained leather grip. He looked at the owl, at the knife, at the woman. "Aren't you afraid I could kill you with this, faster than you could stop me, hands of air or not?"

"Not at all," she said.

He winced, nodded, and looked at the owl.

"It's fresh," she said, her voice surprisingly kind. "As fresh as it can be. I caught it before I was trapped here, a long time ago, intending to use it myself. I've spent considerable effort to preserve it. You don't have to eat the entrails. They'd make you sick, and anyway, I have other uses for them. And you can have lots of water, while you eat." She passed him a fine porcelain pitcher, and he dipped his fingers in to feel cold water. "We're not barbarians here."

Yes, he ate the owl, the whole thing—eyes, claws, beak, feathers. She let him grind up the talons with a stone and mix them in with water because he feared they'd cut his throat going down, otherwise. He didn't vomit, because she told him that if he did, he would have to eat what he threw up, every foul speck.

Oh, you boys love this one, don't you? You'll be telling it to your friends for months. The more disgusting it becomes, the more horrible, the more you'll eat it up. You sbits.

Be gladdened, then. It gets worse.

She refilled the pitcher from the spring twice, and he drank it all. His stomach clenched, and it took all his concentration not to vomit. He'd never tasted anything so foul, never endured anything so horrible.

The woman spread the owl's gray, flecked entrails on a square silver tray. She prodded them, smiling and nodding as the thief fought his urge to gag.

"Eat a dead owl for breakfast," the woman said, laughing softly, "and nothing worse will happen to you all day."

"Now will you show me the way out?" the thief asked through clenched teeth, arms wrapped around his belly.

"No, dear. Now you'll sleep, and then you'll show me the way out." The thief did not believe he'd ever be able to sleep, not with that pain in his belly, but the woman offered him a cup, and he drank something sweet and heady from it, and fell into sleep.

He dreamed of flying, and swooping down from the night, and listening. The world was a teeming place of flitting movements, small sounds fraught with significance, strange odors. Eating was everything. Blood was everything. Flying was not the way humans imagined it, a consuming thrill of freedom, a transcendent experience.

Flying was just the fastest way to get to the blood.

The thief woke, opening his eyes to sunlight and trees. No furs beneath him—only soil, and a root digging into the small of his back. He would have believed it all a dream, if not for the rough, thick taste of feathers still on his tongue. Not even two pitchers of water had not been enough to wash that away.

"You see, you *did* show me the way out," the woman said. "You flew, and took me with you."

He turned his head slowly. His stomach didn't hurt so much now, but his limbs felt stretched, and his head hurt. The woman sat cross-legged in the dirt, her sleeves pushed back, the scars on her arms horribly white in the sun.

"We're free," he said.

"I'm free, my darling," she said. "You belong to me for a while yet. But I'll make it worth your while. You used to be the lowest of the low, but soon you'll be a master thief." She touched his forehead, and he flinched away at first, but her fingers seemed to soothe the pounding in his skull, so he let her go on.

When she drew her hand away, he saw her scars again. "What happened to your arms?" he asked, and then regretted it instantly. What madness, to remind a woman—a creature!—like this of an old injury, and old pain!

She didn't get angry. She just said, "A knife happened," and stood up. "Let's go, thief."

"You call me thief. It's a good enough name. But what do I call you?"

"Call me Mistress, call me wench, I don't care. Come on."

He got to his feet. "What really happened? How did we get out?"

"You consumed the owl, and partook of its spirit. Part of its power became yours, and you flew from the pit. You carried me with you."

"That's unbelievable. I've heard stories, but..."

"I'm what the stories are made of," she said. She set off into the forest, walking with long strides.

"I guess the owl energy is all used up now," he said, a bit wistfully, following her.

She laughed. "It's not like a skin of wine. It's the creature's *soul*, and you consumed it. Its power is in you forever, for as long as your own soul endures." She glanced at him over her shoulder. "That doesn't mean you know how to use it, though. You took on the properties of the beast and then you fainted. I'll expect better than that when we get where we're going."

"Which is where?"

She said the name of the thief's home city.

He stopped short. "I can't go there! I've been exiled from that place!"

"Some say Fate can be bargained with, when the wind is right. But I'm not Fate, and you won't change my mind."

"We won't make it before the snow," he protested.

"Not by walking," she agreed. "That's why we'll have to fly part of the way."

So he didn't demand that they fly right away, just that they walk. He squatted behind a rock about noon, but saw no feathers in his shit.

He tried to make conversation. "How did you wind up in that hole?"

"I thought there was something inside it that I wanted. So I went in after it, and then someone shut the door on me."

"What were you trying to find?"

"The same thing we're going to steal, thief, so you'll know soon enough."

They reached a village just before dusk. She led them through the rutted streets to a thatched building, an inn. The sign read "Goats and Compasses" and depicted a ram's head and a compass rose. The woman nodded toward the building. "You should eat, and I should get used to people again. Let's go inside."

"I'm almost out of money," he said. "I can't afford a night in an inn."

"I suppose you didn't notice that you were in a cavern of *treasures* last night, did you? I have coins. Old coins, from kingdoms long gone, but they'll still recognize silver, I wager."

She started for the door, then paused, looking above the lintel. "Oh, what's this?"

The thief peered upward. "Just a horseshoe nailed over the door. For good luck."

She laughed. "What good do they think that will do? Did you know that, in the olden days, a king passing judgment would make the petitioner pass through an iron gate, to prove he wasn't enchanted, or one of the Fair Folk? People believed that a fairy creature would scream and burn at the mere proximity of iron, and they hung up horseshoes over their doors to keep such creatures from passing freely." She smiled at the thief, looking not at all motherly. "It's good to see that human foolishness endures." She strode through the door.

The thief followed, shaken. He'd been denying the obvious, trying to convince himself the woman was just a witch or a madwoman touched by the gods, but now he began to wonder if she was human at all, or actually something from the twilight realms. He'd believed that the Fair Folk would recoil from the sight of iron, if such creatures existed at all. Apparently they were sturdier than he'd supposed.

He wondered at the scars on her arms, though. A knife, she'd said, but what kind of a knife could harm the likes of her, with her hands of air and fire? One with an iron blade? Perhaps the presence of iron alone couldn't harm one of the Fair Folk ... but it could be that their bodies were vulnerable to iron's touch.

He would have to keep that possibility in mind.

What's that, snot-nose? Your father's a smith, and he told you that devils and monsters and Fair Folk flee from the sight of iron?

Well, that's as may be. This is a fable, not a true history, and fables have all manner of fantastic things in them, don't they?

And you, what is it? Oh. You thought fables all had talking animals. Well, maybe the owl spoke before our thief ate it, bmm? Could well be. Do you care to hear about their evening in the inn, and the music they heard, and the strange way the woman had of laughing at people and the way they dressed? Or do you wish to move ahead, on to something bloodier?

I thought so. I know boys. I used to be one.

They shared a room. The thief took the bed gratefully, though he suspected the woman was not being kind—she would not sleep at all, he supposed. She sat on the floor with a lantern by her knees, shaking bits of bone and brass onto a cloth and studying the patterns they made. Sometimes she frowned. Sometimes—and this was worse—she giggled.

After what felt like only a few moments of sleep, the thief awoke to a great pounding on the door, and someone shouting. "This is the innkeeper! Open the door!"

The woman stood by the window, her mouth turned down. The thief looked at her. "Should we go out the window?" he said, knowing the sound of trouble when he heard it.

"No, I'm curious to see what he wants. Open the door."

The thief pulled his shirt on. The door shuddered in its frame. The innkeeper was hitting it with something heavier than his fist. "Don't knock your own door down!" the thief yelled. "I'm coming."

He unhooked the lock and pulled the door open. The innkeeper stood in the doorway, his face red with fury or exertion, and he held an iron-headed cudgel in one hand.

"What is it, my good man?" the thief asked.

"This money," he said, and flung a handful of coins at the thief's

chest. "It's nothing but painted bits of wood! I don't know how my wife mistook it for the real thing in the first place, but I'm not so easily fooled. You owe—"

"Painted wood?" the woman said sharply. "It's not real?"

The thief stood aside, more than willing to let her take over. She went to the door. "I'm ... sorry for the mistake. Here ...". She opened her coin pouch and shook the contents into her palm. She looked down at the coins in her hand and made a small sound of dismay.

"More painted wood," the innkeeper said. "That won't buy you much, I'm afraid, not even mercy. You can leave, old woman. But I'm going to have your son lashed with a horsewhip. It's been a while since the mayor worked his arm."

"I have money," the thief said, reluctant to part with his few coins—which wouldn't cover the room and their meals anyway—but even more eager to avoid a flogging.

"That bastard," the woman said, still looking at the coins, oblivious. "It wasn't even a real treasure trove, just enchanted junk. I wonder what I was *really* resting on all those years, that I thought was a pile of furs?"

"Don't talk about enchantment," the innkeeper said, fear showing beneath his anger. He lifted his cudgel. "I won't have talk of witchery here."

"You may not forbid me anything," she said, looking into his face. "Stand aside, and we'll be on our way."

He slapped the head of the cudgel into his hand. The thief saw how her gaze followed the movement. She feared the weapon.

"Stand aside, or you'll be a puddle of blood in a moment."

He laughed aloud. "You should be whipped, too, woman. I'll see to it."

"Oh, will you?"

His arm, the one holding the cudgel, bent backward. He cried out and then his forearm bent sharply in an impossible direction, and the bone cracked. The cudgel fell from his hand, and the woman jumped back when it hit the floor.

The man opened his mouth as if to scream, but no sound emerged. His other arm jerked, and then his left leg, and he fell to the floor. The woman's hands of air and fire were at work again.

The thief stood with his money pouch in hand, afraid to move. The woman glanced at him. "Come on, thief. Follow your calling. See if he has a purse. We're not as well off as I'd supposed before. We'd best replenish our coffers."

The thief did as he was told, though he found the man's silent thrashing pitiful and disturbing. He fumbled at the man's belt and found a small purse that jingled. He snatched it away, breaking the leather thong.

The man slid into the room on his face, dragged by invisible hands. The door swung partway shut, but the cudgel was in the way, and held the door ajar. "Move that club!" the woman said. "Now!"

The thief did so, nudging it out of the way with his foot. The door slammed shut. He looked down at the weapon. Perhaps the old stories had a grain of truth to them after all. Perhaps the Fair Folk *couldn't* touch iron—at least, not with their hands of air and fire. They could move doors, beds, people, but nothing made of iron.

The trapdoor over the cavern had been made of iron, he recalled. And probably the walls of the cave were full of it as well. Whoever had imprisoned this woman had done his work well, until the thief came along and ruined it.

He heard a horrible, wet noise from behind him. He didn't look. "What are you doing?" he asked.

"Turning him into a puddle of blood, like I promised," she said. She did not sound angry, or pleased, just ... intent. She was a woman doing a difficult job well.

The thief kept his face turned to the wall.

Long minutes later, she said, "I don't suppose it's worthwhile to eat him. His spirit can't have much of use. Stupidity and miseries and little else."

"Can we go now?" the thief asked, shuddering. He would not eat human flesh. Never that, no matter what she said, no matter if it gave

him the strength of a giant or the mind of a scholar or the power of a king. Never that.

"We can go if you're ready to fly. I'd prefer if you did it without fainting this time."

"All right. I'll try."

They slipped out of the inn quietly, going down the back stairs. To avoid exiting through the front, they went into the kitchen. They could escape through the back door.

A little boy, shirtless, no more than 10, stood by a long table, munching on a piece of bread. The thief and the woman stopped short. The boy swallowed silently, then narrowed his eyes. When his expression soured, it became obvious that he was the innkeeper's son—their features were nearly identical. "Father!" he shouted, startling the thief. "Father, people's in the kitchen, trying to leave without paying!"

"Shut up, boy," the woman said, and stepped forward, raising her scarred hands.

"No!" the thief said. "Let's just go, we'll fly, come on! He's only a boy."

The woman glared at the boy and hissed. The boy's head rocked as if he'd been slapped.

The thief grabbed the woman's arm—it felt like flesh, ordinary flesh, but what did he know?—and pulled her toward the door.

They emerged into the wide space between the inn and the stables. "We need open air," the woman said. "Too many eaves here." She started toward the back of the inn, and the thief followed. In the open space out back, the woman turned on him. "Now fly, you bastard. South."

"I—I don't know how!"

"You know," she said. "You remember it in your bones and in your bowels. What's flying? Why do you fly?"

He struggled to put the concept into words. "To get to the blood," he said, remembering his dream, remembering the strange experience of viewing the world through an owl's senses. "I fly to get to the blood."

"You remember," she said, "you imagine, and that is but one short step from the act itself."

"Yes." He stared past her, into the sky. Sky above, blood below. Yes.

He heard footsteps and a shout. Dimly, with a bird's disinterest for things scurrying on the ground, he saw the innkeeper's son, still holding his chunk of bread. The boy yelled something the thief couldn't understand.

The thief wondered if the boy was blood, and decided not. Too big.

Since there was nothing to eat here, the thief flew away. He felt something—a presence next to him, or on him, or beside him—but that seemed only right and natural, and he thought of it no more.

He flew south, toward blood.

After a long time, the thief stood swaying in a field, the taste of something nasty in his mouth. He spat out bits of fur.

The woman stood beside him. She patted him on the back. "You swooped down and snatched up a mouse. Sorry. I couldn't stop you."

He spat again, and gagged.

"Oh, stop that. You ate a whole dead owl, surely you can stand the taste of one little mouse. The essence might help you be stealthier, too."

"I wish I'd never fallen down your god-rotted hole," he said, spitting again.

"That's only because you haven't found untold wealth yet. Come, we're near the city of your disgrace. It's been a long time since I've been there. I wonder how it's changed?" She glanced at him. "Do you want to see your parents or...anything? You humans have strange ideas about such things. You've been good, I'm willing to indulge you." She walked through the moonlit pasture, beckoning him to follow.

He didn't look at her. This was the first time she'd openly admit-

ted that she wasn't human. "No. They...they agreed with the judgment passed down by the mayor. They agreed that I should be exiled. They're very strict, very traditional. They forget what it's like to be young and hot-blooded..."

"Young and hot-blooded." She shook her head. "Your kind mystify me. I've always been as old as I am now."

He sighed. "Can't you even pretend to be a normal woman?"

"Once we're inside the city walls, certainly. If that proves advantageous. But here, between us...what's the point?"

"What's going to become of me, when all this is done?" Humans never got the good end of a bargain with the Fair Folk in the stories, and he hadn't even struck a bargain with this one, just been coerced along.

"I think I'll keep you for a while. You are a useful set of hands, and you have some spine, though it's buried deeply. We've had a rough time of it these past two days, I know, but things will get better, once I take care of this little errand." She shook her head. "I left the Isle of my people a very long time ago, to fetch this item. I never imagined it would take so long. It's even possible that my Queen grows impatient, and her patience is like that of a mountain."

"What are we stealing? Why do you insist on keeping it secret?"

"Just contrariness. Why do you want to know so badly?"

"If I'm supposed to steal something, it would be helpful to know what it is, so that I can make plans!"

"You never make plans anyway," she said, waving his objections away. "You wait for a clear opportunity, and you seize it. In this case, I'm going to prepare the opportunity for you. All you have to do is grab what I tell you to grab and then follow me."

The thief was unhappy with that, but he could do little about it. So he followed the woman as they neared the city of his birth, a walled city on the coast. As they neared the gates (which were just opening as dawn approached), the thief noticed something strange. Several wooden cross-pieces had been erected outside the wall, and a metal cage hung from each beam. "What are those for?" the thief asked.

"I don't know. It's your city."

"They didn't have these last time I was here."

A man sat in one of the cages, his legs crossed beneath him. The bottom of the cage hung at roughly eye level. The cage was floored with wood, and the prisoner sat staring blankly toward the city.

"What's this?" the thief called to him. "What's the meaning of this cage?" The man looked at him for a moment, then turned his face away and wept.

"Imprisoned in an iron cage," the woman said, horrified. "I wonder if he's only meant to hang there for a short time, or if they'll leave him until he dies?"

The thief only shook his head.

"You humans. Your ingenuity never fails to amaze me."

You look like you're about to piss yourself, smith's son. What is it?

Yes, I know every town you've ever heard of has punishment cages, like this cursed one I'm inside, like the ones the thief saw, yes. What of it?

He'd never seen one before because this fable takes place in the past, in a time before any of you were born, when your parents, if they lived at all, were mere children themselves. The cages were a new thing, then.

Ask your mothers and fathers if you don't believe me, or your grand-parents. I wager they'll tell you they used to live in pleasanter times, that people haven't always been so treacherous and cruel, and that there was no need for these cages, long ago.

They're wrong, though, my boys. People have always been as they are now, throughout all time.

I know, you're impatient. We're almost done. I'll pass by their arrival, the way they came through the gates unnoticed, the thief surprised and a little dismayed to find that his exile was of so little importance that the guards didn't even recognize him. He knew there were those in the city who would know his face, though, even with his black beard, and so he walked with his head down. The woman

walked the streets with great assurance, and the thief's heart sank as it became clear that she intended to begin this grand theft of hers right now, in daylight.

And then they reached the destination, and it was a bouse the thief knew.

No," the thief said, stopping short on the cobbles. "Not that house."
"None other," the woman said. "Do you know it? Is it the home of a childhood friend, perhaps?" She half smiled, and the thief wondered how much she knew about him, wondered if she could see his dreams, or hear his memories and thoughts.

"It is the captain's house. The house of the man who had me exiled."
"Well," the woman said, pleased. "I told you it was destiny, didn't I? You're familiar with his house, then, the arrangement of rooms?"

"Yes," the thief said, because she would know if he lied. "Yes, I've been inside many times. What can he have that you want?"

"Something his father stole ... or his father's father, or perhaps the one before that. Who knows? I can't keep up with your teeming generations, thief. Some ancestor of his landed on the Isle of my homeland and, through blind luck and stupid audacity, made off with something that belongs to my Queen. When I came to steal it back... I found that I could not do so alone, that I needed a human agent. Before I could get help, I was tricked into the prison where you found me."

"How did you wind up in a place so distant from here?"

"That's a long story," she said darkly. "And one I have little interest in telling you. I imagine the one who holds that treasure now will be less cautious, less resourceful, than his forefather."

The thief knew the captain, and he doubted her assessment. The captain was a formidable man. "How do you know he even has the treasure? Fortunes change over generations."

"It's in the house," she said. "The owl's guts told me that much."

"Ah. What do we do now?"

"We break in, and murder everyone in the house, and you scoop up the treasure when I point it out to you. Easy enough, yes?"

The thief stared at her. "Murder?"

"Yes," she said placidly. "I am to kill the thief—or his descendant, as that's the best I can do—and all who serve him, and all who dwell in his house."

"But ... his daughter ..."

"Ah, yes. The root of your exile. You'd best hope she's married, and living in another man's house, hadn't you? She raised her eyebrow. "But I suppose her value as a wife might have been ... diminished ... by the cause of your exile? Unless human customs have changed greatly while I've been underground."

"I won't help you if you kill her," the thief said.

"We'll see," she said.

They proceeded up the walk to the captain's front door. The woman pounded on the wood with her fist, then frowned. "Look, the doorknob's made of iron," she said. She peered at the door jamb. "And there's iron hammered onto the frame, here. That wasn't here the first time I arrived. It appears I taught the old man caution, though as usual they misunderstand the relationship my kind has with iron."

"I knew a man once," the thief said slowly, "who couldn't eat shrimp or lobster. If he did, his skin puffed up and turned red and

split. Is it something like that, that iron does to you?"

Before she could answer, the door opened. The thief tensed, expecting to see the captain's face, expecting to be shouted at and struck.

Instead, it was the captain's daughter, a bit older of course but still lovely, her hair falling in fine curls around her face. Seeing her brought forth a welter of emotions—shame at what he'd done to her life, wistfulness for those sweet, exciting days with her, sadness at what had become of his life, resentment of her as the fundamental cause of his current situation.

"Yes?" she said. "Can I—" Her eyes widened as she recognized the thief. "You," she said, and for a moment he thought she would strike him—he'd chosen exile over marriage to her, which certainly gave her cause for anger. But she only said, "You have to go! What if my father sees you?"

"My nephew has come to beg your father's forgiveness," the woman said.

The thief stared at her—fortunately, the captain's daughter did, too, and so she didn't notice his expression. "What? I don't—"

"He's my grand-nephew, in truth, and after his... unfortunate experiences here... he came to live with me. He has made quite a life for himself, down the coast, and he has always regretted what happened. He'd like to speak to your father, to offer his apologies, and—if possible—find out what he has to do to make things right." Then, as if the question had just occurred to her, the woman said, "Have you married, child?"

The captain's daughter looked at her, then at the thief, and shook her head. "No. I never have."

"Then we've come in time," the woman said. "May we come in?"

The captain's daughter stepped aside. The woman glanced at the thief, grinning with her eyes, and stepped through the door. The thief followed.

The daughter led them down the hall, glancing over her shoulder at the thief all the while, worry and confusion showing in her face. The thief avoided her gaze, glad the woman hadn't killed her straight out, but troubled by this pretense. There could

be no neat way out of this. There would be a theft here, at the very least, and if he knew this woman at all, there would also be blood.

Perhaps I can intercede to save her life, he thought, looking at the curls falling down her back.

But that was a foolish thought. To avoid thinking, the thief looked around the house. It hadn't changed much. The walls were hung with brass nautical implements and lined with shelves and cabinets, which held strange curios from other lands—figurines, bits of statuary, slivers of petrified wood, crystal formations.

The daughter led them to a sitting room. "Father is in his office. I'll ... I suppose I'll go and get him. You can wait here."

After she left, the woman said, "Do they have servants?"

The thief jumped. "N-no, they didn't, anyway. A woman came in the evenings to cook for them, but that was all. The mother and daughter kept the house in order otherwise."

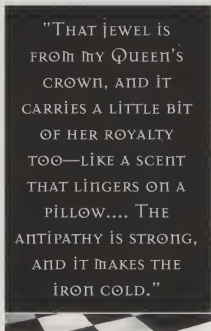
"So just the parents and the girl to contend with. Good."

"Why did you tell her all of that, about my coming to make things right?"

"I was going to twist her head off, thief, but I decided to honor your wishes, for the time being, at least. I told you you'd been good. I'm feeling indulgent."

"You don't—"

Someone shouted elsewhere in the house, and something crashed, like furniture falling over. Boots pounded down the hall.



"I think Papa's coming," the woman said.

The captain entered the room, stopping just inside the door. He ignored the woman entirely, staring at the thief. "You," he said. "I didn't believe her. I didn't think you were *this* sort of a fool." Daintier footsteps followed, and the daughter and her mother appeared behind the captain, each laying a restraining hand on his arm. He shook them off and stalked into the room. He was not a big man, but strong, his muscles standing out like ropes.

The woman raised her arms, and the captain stopped in mid-stride, his eyes bulging.

"Now that you've calmed down, perhaps we can talk," the woman said. The daughter and the captain's wife stood unmoving, too, their eyes wide. "You have something that belongs to my mistress—a jewel, a green jewel. One of your grand-sires stole it, and I've come to take it back." She stood and approached the captain. She brushed back her sleeve and turned her arm, showing him the scars. "That old thief cut me, too, and trapped me. You look very much like him, and if you don't cooperate, I might forget the distinction between you and your ancestor. We wouldn't want *that*."

The captain twitched a little around the mouth. The woman stepped closer to him and touched her finger to his chin. His mouth dropped open. He made a low, moaning sound.

"You don't want that old jewel anyway, do you?" she asked softly. "No."

"So where is it?"

"My office."

She turned and looked at the thief. "Let's go fetch it, then."

The thief nodded, queasy. He'd thought he hated the captain, but seeing him like this, afraid and paralyzed, made him sick, not satisfied.

"This is a good opportunity for you," the woman said. "We've got him right where we want him. You can make any ... demands ... that you like. I'll see that he agrees." She looked, pointedly, at the captain's daughter.

The thief looked at her, the woman he'd loved once, or believed he'd loved. At her body, still beautiful, which had once moved under him and still moved in his dreams. He could have her, he knew. Take her with him. The woman could even make her...love him. If he wanted that.

But he hadn't wanted her enough to stay and marry her the first time, had he? And he shouldn't do so now. She deserved better.

Slowly, the thief shook his head. "I want nothing from this house."

The woman curbed her lip. "You think you're being noble, I suppose. She might have had a pleasant life, with you. I could have made her forget this nonsense." She clapped her hands together, as if brushing off dust. "Very well. Let's go." She lifted her hand, and the daughter and her mother fell, to lie stiffly on the carpet like tumbled statues. The thief winced, but he could do nothing to help them. He'd done all he could.

They went to the captain's office. The woman stepped inside, assessed the room—shelves of books, a large desk, lamps, chairs—and walked straight to a glassed-in case. "There," she said. "The jewel."

The thief looked into the case, and saw no jewel. Only a large dark sphere of ...

Ah. It was an intricate, spherical metal cage, a thing of curves and layers. A journeyman smith's useless piece of finery, perhaps. An iron ball of filigree, as big as two fists held together, with a tiny green jewel set deep in the center.

"You can't even touch it," the thief said.

"Why else do you think I brought you?"

The thief nodded. He took a heavy piece of quartz from the captain's desk and shattered the glass, then reached inside and grasped the iron cage. "It's cold!" he gasped.

"I imagine," the woman said. "Though it would burn me. That jewel is from my Queen's crown, and it carries a little bit of her royalty still—like a scent that lingers on a pillow. To have even the Queen's decoration trapped in a cage of iron ..." She shook her head. "The antipathy is strong, and it makes the iron cold."

"What do we do now?" the thief asked, his fingers growing numb. "Where ... where do we go?" For he was thinking of the far Isle of the Fair Folk, and of the wonders and horrors he would see there, of the madness and forgetfulness that would surely overcome him on those shores.

"Back to the hole in the ground," she said. "There are smith's tools there, among all the other things. And as iron cannot be enchanted, I know those tools are real, and not bits of wood or ofal made to look like coins and furs."

"You want me to break this cage, and free the jewel," he said. "I've never used smith's tools."

"If you can't figure it out, my thief, we'll just find a blacksmith and let you eat him whole, hands and ankles, heart and eyeballs. Then you'll know how to wield a hammer. Do you prefer that course?"

"I...think I can learn enough on my own to break this cage."

"Acts of destruction *are* the easiest to learn, aren't they, thief?"

They went down the hall.

"What will become of the captain and his family?" the thief asked. "Will you spare them?"

"Would you like to consume the daughter, eat every bit of her, and keep a little of her with you always in that fashion?"

"Gods! No, monster, I would not!"

"Very well. Then her soul will be consigned to wherever such things go. I'm going to kill them all, thief."

"You horrible—"

"Clutch that ball tightly, my dear," she said. "And go to sleep."

The thief did.

He woke, groggy, lying on a pile of musty furs.

"My sleepy thief. I hit you with that enchantment hard. I'm sorry."

He sat up in the dimness and screamed as every part of his body exploded into pins and needles as his sleeping limbs woke.

Only his hands, still clasping the metal ball, were awake. The proximity to the iron had kept her enchantment from making his hands fall asleep.

"That's right, move around," the woman said. "Work out the stiffness."

"We're back?" he croaked, his throat dry. "Underground?"

"You walked the whole way, though it's a jerky, stiff-legged walk, and it tired me out to drive you that way. I thought you'd wake up sooner, but I was a little ... annoyed ... when I put you under. You really shouldn't speak to me harshly, thief. I had you drag away the old metal trapdoor and build a wooden one to replace it, and there's a ladder now. Otherwise, yes, this is our familiar abode."

"The girl, the captain's daughter—"

"A puddle," she said, waving her hand. "A pool of nothing much. When your arms are well awake, the smith's tools are there, and I've got a fire going. We'll figure out how to break that ball."

"Why did you kill them?" The thief squeezed the cold iron ball.

"Because of the hurt their ancestor gave me. He was beyond my reach, so I contented myself with the descendants."

"You're inhuman."

"You state the obvious."

"I need water," he said suddenly.

"I imagine."

"The pitcher is ..."

"Over there," she said, and stretched out her arm to point.

The thief saw his opportunity. He hurled the ball as hard as he could toward her midsection.

She grunted as the ball struck her, then screamed. Smoke rose from her dress as it caught fire. In the dimness, the thief could hardly see what had happened, but it seemed that the iron ball had buried itself into her stomach.

"You shit-eating bastard," she shrieked. She reached down as if to pull the ball away, but screamed and pulled her hands back when she touched it.

Insubstantial hands gripped the thief's throat, and he grunted and

Continued on page 88

BY STEVEN POPKES

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS COCOZZA

STEGOSAURUS BOY

The earth
hides its
secrets
big and
small. But
perseverance,
determination,
and most
of all, hope,
can uncover
them in
the end.

I couldn't for the life of me find my compass. I looked all over my room. I mean I moved the dinosaur models and I have a *lot* of dinosaur models. I even moved the stegosaurus skeleton I made out of balsa wood from the Smithsonian drawing. Then, I searched the whole second floor of the house and then the rest of the house. I couldn't find it.

This was serious business. I had made plans (finally!) to go out to Devil's Racetrack to hunt for some new fossils and I had to catch the bus. Maybe this time I'd find something better than the crinoids that are everywhere in North Alabama. The Racetrack was just outside of Huntsville, way over off Hollow Road. There weren't any trails so I would have to get off at the Hollow Road stop and use the topo map to bushwhack up the hill until I found it—I *needed* that compass. Papa was at work so I couldn't ask him.

I'd checked everywhere but one place: the hall closet. The bad news about Papa is he's kind of Pennsylvania Dutch about keeping everything in the house and on the farm neat and tidy. Anything loose or disorganized might well disappear. The fact I'm 13 doesn't change anything. The good news about him is he never throws anything away. It just gets filed into the closet. God knows what he's going to do when the closet finally fills up. Put things out to the barn, I suppose.

Anyway, I took a deep breath, opened the closet, and started pulling boxes out quick as I could: boots, papers, toys—even more dinosaurs, especially a little stegosaurus doll I remembered sleeping with when I was a kid. I guess Papa didn't call me Stegosaurus Boy for nothing. The doll had come home with me from New York when I was three. Papa felt I should know my people on both sides of the family. Papa's kin were all over the state. Mama's family lived up and around Connecticut and New Jersey. I remember seeing stegosaurus bones for the first time all articulated together in the Museum of Natural History. I've loved it and every other dinosaur I've ever read about since. Late every August Papa dutifully takes me up there for a week. This year would be no different. But the summer was still young.

You don't find dinosaur fossils in North Alabama. If erosion is a time machine, it's worn way past dinosaurs and is working on invertebrates back in the Mississippian Period. The limestone from that time was over a mile thick and it's still going strong. I'd be lucky to find a shark tooth. All of the dinosaurs were down south in the Smackover Formation. There were still fossils to be found up here, of course: blastoids, coral, and crinoids. Most of Alabama is built on limestone. Look inside limestone and what do you see? Lots and lots of crinoids. All fossils are windows back in time and if the window didn't look out on exactly the landscape I wanted to see, it still opened somewhere. Crinoids would do until I got a chance to get to some of the big sites out west.

I put the doll down and pulled the next box out and looked inside. *Gotscha*. Took the compass, put the boxes back in the closet, and got ready. I put the doll back on the shelf in my room where it belonged. I picked up my backpack and looked around



the room to see if I'd forgotten anything. For a moment, all of the dinosaur models and pictures looked like they were in the jungle staring back at me. If I were living back then, these guys, big as houses, would have been watching me. I would have felt like an Indian surrounded by cougars with nothing left to do but make offerings to them. Maybe that's how totem poles got started. I grinned. I liked the idea. I left the room whistling.

It was June 23, 1964, and I figured my summer had finally begun.

THE BUS DRIVER GREETED ME BY NAME—BRIAN. I TAKE THE BUS A LOT. It took a little less than an hour to get to Hollow Road. I went past the new HIC Building, where Papa worked on the Saturn V. It wasn't much to look at, just an old converted cotton mill, but I thought it was great. Papa said the Apollo project was the most exciting thing he had ever built.

I stopped at the Safeway to get food for tonight and tomorrow. I'd catch the bus tomorrow evening. I was thinking so hard about getting to the Racetrack I almost went through the colored line. I stopped myself and went over to the line for whites.

Finally, I told the bus driver to let me out. There weren't any bus stops around the Racetrack. I expect there wasn't a scheduled stop between here and Pulaski, Tennessee. Just wide spots in the road where people waited for the bus to come by.

It had started to turn to evening when I finally broke through the brush onto the Racetrack: a half-mile ring of limestone rocks surrounding the top of Devil's Hill. I'd heard that Satan himself liked to walk there on full-moon nights. That's why nothing grew there. The bleached, white gravel was all that was left of the bones Satan collected. Actually, it was a layer of hard flint under a softer mountain of limestone. As the limestone eroded over time, the flint remained. The top of Devil's Hill was the sherbet and the flint was the cone. The ring was melted syrup.

I'd heard stories about this place since I was three years old. The latest came just after the war when Deacon Goodman came running out of the woods yelling that a great, hairy ape had chased him for two miles until by the grace of God he'd escaped. People looked all over that patch of ground for a week and found nothing but wild onion, the colored farmer who owned the land, and a bear, which most decided was Deacon Goodman's ape.

Every place around Huntsville had one story or another. Monte Sano was supposed to be the grave of an Indian princess killed by a witch who had power over wolves. There used to be a lot of stories about wolves up in the hills.

There was even supposed to be an old crocodile that lived in the creek over near our place. The size of the beast had grown with the telling until, in 1935, old Abner Phelps swore he'd seen it walking around on two legs under a bright full moon. That story was written up in the *Huntsville Times*, which also quoted some that said Abner had spread around the story himself to raise the value of his property as a tourist attraction. It didn't matter much. As soon as Abner died, just after the war, my grandfather bought the piece from Abner's son and added his hundred acres to our own.

I didn't think much of the stories as I pulled down some leaves and bedded down on the track itself to get some relief from the mos-

quitoes. The stories didn't mean much to me. Instead, I lay back and listened as I watched the clear sky for meteors. If I was lucky, I might be able to see one of the new satellites. That would be something. The last thing I remember before I fell asleep was watching the full moon rise.

WORKED MOST OF THE NEXT DAY ON MY HANDS AND KNEES. IT WAS: examine a single square foot, move on, examine again. I found a couple of beautiful crinoids—one nearly three inches long, like an orchid engraved into the rock. Not much else looked interesting.

The heat bothered me. Usually it didn't, but today I felt twitchy and irritable. Little noises from behind kept startling me—noises I'd heard practically since I was born. In the quiet, every little sound was magnified. My hands itched. Everything smelled different and the light hurt my eyes. I just felt weird. Must be getting a cold or something, I thought. I felt *pumpy*.

Concentrate, Brian. I tried to keep thinking about the pictures of fossils I'd seen in books: stegosaurus, of course—my favorite. But others, too: allosaurus, brontosaurus, dimetrodon. I couldn't get them out of my mind. The crinoids seemed very small and discouraging. Being on edge didn't help matters. I think if I'd been at a place where it was easier to get home, like Monte Sano near my house, I might have packed it in and gone back to town.

By mid-afternoon I'd had enough. The Racetrack had the remains of a lot of nice stuff but it had all fallen down the hill and broken up a long time ago. I looked up the hill. Maybe there was something up there still intact.

It was an hour's worth of hard climbing just to get past the ledges. Sheets of limestone had broken away and shattered on the way down. That didn't expose anything exciting where I was, but it gave me ideas for other trips. All sorts of things turn up that way.

Above the ledges the hill rounded out and I made my way through the brush, keeping one eye on the ground for exposed rock and the other on the ground for exposed snakes. Nothing on both counts.

I reached the top. The trees parted and the ground fell away. I had to grab a tree to keep from dropping into a sinkhole.

It was too deep to climb down but I could see by the exposed walls it was still Mississippian. Strange, I said to myself. There wasn't a sinkhole on any of the maps I had.

The sinkhole was more like a fissure that started at the crown of the hill and then closed 15 feet or so farther down. The bottom looked like it might have been 40 feet deep or so. It looked recently exposed; none of the rocks looked very weathered. Maybe the rain had come in through the opening at the top and undercut the limestone and eventually the shell collapsed downhill. It must have happened since the last geological survey.

I looked more closely and saw there was a ledge maybe 20 feet down. It was covered in loose rubble—probably the remains of the shell. Peeking out below that was older limestone. I started to get excited.

Think of it this way. It's the middle of the Mississippian and the hill is now a mountain, grand and intact under the water. Inside the mountain like a Chinese box is the remnant of an earlier mountain. The mountain is made of limestone but the earlier mountain is made of something harder. Granite, maybe, if it's old enough. The water falls away in the Jurassic and it becomes dry uplands. But there's a fissure left in the hill from the rainwater cuts through the mountain. The limestone is soft and dissolves quickly but the elder mountain doesn't wear away so quickly. Eventually there's a hole in the top of the mountain with a hard floor. Animals from the Jurassic fall into the sinkhole, get trapped, die. Then, the top caves in over it, protecting the bones. They lie on the floor while the limestone dissolves over them, eventually becoming Jurassic shale but with Mississippian limestone on top. But there's still this little hole on the top and the process begins again. But this time, the flow is different. It cuts *under* what had been the bottom of the sinkhole. So now there's a cavity under the ledge. Later, something happens, an earthquake, maybe, and one opening is plugged up while another opens. The water

FOR A MINUTE I
CLOSED MY EYES AND
I COULD SEE THEM,
ANIMALS SO BIG
THEY LOOKED LIKE
THEY WERE MOVING
IN SLOW MOTION.



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shifts and goes between the seams of the fallen limestone and what has now become Jurassic shale. The limestone is eaten *upward* until the top caves in: a Jurassic ledge in the middle of a Mississippian fossil bed. This sort of thing had happened before. I'd read about it at other sites.

Who knew what might be down there?

For a minute I closed my eyes and I could see them, animals so big they looked like they were moving in slow motion. I could almost hear them calling to one another as they bedded down for the evening.

I stood there almost jumping up and down, desperate to get down there but I didn't have the equipment and it was getting dark.

Rope, I thought as I hiked down the mountain, shaking with excitement. I would need a lot of rope.

I packed up what I had and worked my way down the hill to the road. I was fit to be tied. Every little sound in the woods made me feel I was about to leap out of my skin; every little scare gave me an electric shock. I itched and sweated and scratched myself raw walking in the woods. I was as anxious as if I'd been stung by a bee. If I was coming down with something, I wished it would get it over with. I had things to do.

It was dark when I got to the road. Papa was waiting for me.

EVENING, BRIAN," HE SAID. HE LIT A CIGARETTE.

I didn't expect him. Papa looked all right; quiet as always, leaning against the car with a cigarette in his hand. Papa's a big man with heavy, thick arms and dark jowls, kind of like a hairy Santa Claus without the beard. But tonight he had a drawn look about him. He told me to get in the car.

I was uneasy. I'd been camping out on summer nights since I was 10. Mostly it was on our own property. You can go pretty far on 200 acres. But I'd been up to Monte Sano and down to Guntersville Lake on my own and Papa had never minded. I wondered if there was something special about the Racetrack I didn't know about.

"Three civil rights workers came up missing yesterday. Two Northerners and a local colored boy."

"Where?"

"Philadelphia, Mississippi."

"Where's that?"

He didn't say anything immediately. "About an hour past Aikeville."

"Oh. Aikeville was where we had the Kinder Family Reunion every year. This coming weekend as a matter of fact."

I was Kinder on both sides but mainly through my father, whose mother was a Kinder. Mama was so distant a relative there was no need to talk about it. Papa always told me to say, "Rest her soul," after I mentioned her, so: Rest Her Soul. She died when I was born. I got my first name, Brian, from her father, so with Papa's name, Baker, I duly represent both sides of the family. Mama's link to the Kinders was way back in Germany.

He glanced at me. "They think it's the Klan."

"Jesus," I said.

Everybody had been talking about civil rights around town. Heck, the governor had been elected saying segregation forever and was as close to being Ku Klux Klan as could be and not wear a sheet. You couldn't watch TV without hearing how backward we all were down here and needed, really needed, a helping hand from up north. But we didn't get civil rights workers in Huntsville. We got German radio stations and German appliance stores. I guess it made Doctor Von Braun happy. The German stores still had white and colored entrances so I guess that made the governor happy. I knew Papa wasn't Klan, but my cousin Joe Stillings was. It wasn't something you talked about.

Papa nodded. "Was there anybody else up there?"

"No. Just me."

"Good." Papa breathed a little easier. "They used to hold Klan meetings up there when I was a kid. When I got your note I thought you might get in trouble." He smiled and patted my knee. "Why

don't you stay away from the Racetrack for a while."

I shrugged but inside I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to lie to Papa but how could I leave that fissure unexplored? If I told him, he'd go all fatherly on me and start wondering why a 13-year-old boy would want to climb down into a 40-foot sinkhole. It was one of those situations where what my father didn't know would help me out. But now he'd actually *asked* me not to do something.

"I don't think we'll ever have trouble like that. After all, it happened in Mississippi." I hadn't actually said I wasn't going to come back here and he hadn't actually ordered me not to. I didn't really believe it; it was more in the line of setting up my own defense if I got caught.

"True enough," he said, not calling me on it and I breathed a little easier. "Still, Mississippi's not so far. You have to figure things could come this way." He looked over at me and smiled. "You look tired, son. Did you sleep OK?"

"Yes. It was hot up there." I didn't mention the sinkhole, obviously. "How about you?"

He chuckled. "I'm OK."

Papa pulled into the Sam's Diner and bought us dinner.

I DIDN'T HAVE THE RIGHT KIND OF ROPE ON THE FARM SO I HAD to go looking for it. That took a couple of days so I didn't get back to the Racetrack right away. Papa brought home the papers each evening and each evening there was some article about the three civil rights workers. They found the car burned to a crisp outside Philadelphia a day after I got back. They hadn't found the civil rights workers yet.

By now the papers were full of them. My father subscribed to the *Huntsville Times* and occasionally brought home the *Montgomery* or *Birmingham* paper. Huntsville just didn't talk about it much. The rest didn't take the disappearance seriously. He brought home the northern papers and they pointed a different picture. I learned where in Mississippi Philadelphia and Meridian were. I knew the road those boys took into Philadelphia and where they had been expected to return to Meridian. I knew where the car was and how it had to have been dragged there since it was as far away as possible from anybody. I knew the name of the Sheriff of Philadelphia (Rainey), which church was bombed two weeks before (Mt. Zion Methodist Church), and who else might have been killed at about the same time in the great state of Mississippi (several people).

All of the papers had printed up maps. The FBI was involved by the end of the week and there were FBI pictures in the northern papers. By the time we left for the reunion, I knew their names and faces: Andrew Goodman, James Earl Chaney, and Michael Henry Schwerner. Michael and Andrew were both from New York. I wondered if they were kin to my mother but I was afraid to ask Papa. I figured they probably weren't, but the only people I knew up there were my mother's family. I sure didn't want to be kin to any more dead people.

James Earl Chaney was a local colored boy who lived in Meridian. I studied his picture in the paper for a long time. He had a nice face with honest eyes. I didn't know what to make of it.

Friday night before we left for Aikeville was the full moon, as clear and as beautiful a night as you could want. Papa was gone for the evening on the monthly meeting for the Kinder Trust. Normally, I liked full-moon nights but this night I couldn't rest easy. I went and found my old stegosaurus doll. I wouldn't have done it if Papa had been there. I kept turning my little stegosaurus over and over in my hands while I was sitting on the back porch. Indians did that, maybe. Handle their carvings of hawks or fish in times of trouble. Heck, lots of people did that. Catholics had rosaries. The Baptists I knew held their Bibles like a shield. Everybody had one totem or another. I petted the stegosaurus doll in my hands like it was real and held it close. Of all the animals in this world that have ever been, this one was mine. Maybe the Indians, Catholics, and Baptists felt the same way.

I couldn't sleep. I could barely lie down. I was just as itchy and jittery as I'd been up on the Racetrack. I'd sit down for a minute, then I'd jump up again. It was all I could do to stay indoors and not run

around narked through the bushes. I felt all weird, warm, and tingly one minute and cold as ice the next. Papa always said puberty was hard on a boy but this was different from what he'd talked about. It made me wonder if I wasn't coming down with one of the fevers old people talked about: yellow fever or malaria. I figured it couldn't be anything like that; the DDT fog trucks were killing mosquitoes even out as far as we were.

I got hungry, then, and rummaged through the refrigerator. There were hamburgers and hot dogs in there but the idea of them made me queasy. There was half a head of lettuce there and I pulled that out and ate it with chips and dip. I mean, it seemed natural at the time but later I thought I might be running a fever after all.

It was hours I could even lie down and when I finally did sleep, I dreamed I was a stegosaurus trapped in a pillow.

IT WAS A LONG DRIVE TO ALICEVILLE. THE ROADS WERE THIN AND wavering in the rain. The civil rights workers were all over my mind. I couldn't watch the rain without thinking about their car.

"Do you think they're dead?" I asked out of the silence.

Papa must have been thinking about the same thing. "If the Klan was involved, they were dead before we heard about it."

I thought about that. The thing was that now they were starting to feel real to me. Before, they were just names on the radio like the campaign commercials. Barry Goldwater was running for president—what did I know about him? But every few minutes I heard, "In your heart you know he's right" over the radio. They were selling something called Goldwater at Martin's Theatre downtown. The manager liked to say, "In your heart you know it's Ginger Ale." Barry Goldwater wasn't any more real than Lyndon Johnson, though if you said you liked Johnson around town somebody might slap you silly. Nobody liked Johnson; they liked Johnson's money.

"Mississippi's another world," Papa said quietly. "There's nowhere else like it. Any fool could see integration coming at us like a steam train after the Topeka case and even Mississippi fools should have been able to see daylight after that business with Ole Miss a couple of years ago. It's going to come to us, eventually, in spite of the governor. Hell, they've been blowing up things down in Birmingham for more than 10 years and only now they're getting around to taking a look at it." He shook his head. "It's going to be a big bloody mess but it's going to happen. Not this year. Not the next. But soon. In Mississippi, they think segregation is natural law and God's will prevails. And they think with their guns. I hope to God we'll do better."

He stopped talking and the only sound was the wiper blades and the hiss of the wet road. Papa looked at me, then back at the road.

"But we probably won't. We're not saints. Brian, if you don't learn anything else from me, you got to learn this: Nothing is simple. People try to make it simple and tell you only simple things because it's too hard to think about things that are complicated." He pounded the steering wheel with his fist. "At the heart of this whole thing is privilege. Once whites had the privilege of owning colored people. There ain't no way around that. They lost that privilege in the War Between the States. They've been—we've been, because I ain't no different—fighting a holding action to keep what we had ever since. But even that's too simple."

I stared at him. His lips were pressed thin and he was watching the road intently.

Papa continued: "You know there's a colored boy working for me at the HIC Building? Nearly as old as I am and smart as hell, too." He looked at me again. "What do you think he does there? He's a clerk, someone whose job it is to put the drawings in the vault and take them out again. A four-year degree in engineering from Alabama A & M with 10 years of experience and he's working as a clerk. He's glad to have it since it's better than anything else he could get. The only reason he could get it at all is 'cause we're all rolling in Johnson money and it looks good to have a couple of colored people working around the place. He's a better engineer than I am. By rights, I should be working for him. So, should I give up my job for him? Should I take money out of my pocket and give it to him just because

he deserves it?"

Papa slapped the dash and I jumped. "Hell, no. I earned that money. That money paid for this car. It pays every year for your trip up to New York. It might pay for your college someday, should you ever take an interest in something besides rocks. Now, somebody a little quicker than me might say I'm entitled to it because I'm white and he's not. But Mama taught me not to lie. The truth is I want that money. I don't mind taking advantage of a smart colored boy, or anybody else, to get it. That colored boy will let me do it, too, because I'm satisfied with just the big piece of pie and not the whole thing. I'm nice enough to leave a little slice for him. It ain't right. It ain't pretty. And it doesn't make me happy, but it would cost me too much to change it."

Papa had been thinking about this for a while; I knew the signs. He was like that. He'd get something going on in his mind and think about it, chew over it, and never say a word until one day a boy might ask a little question and then it would all come out.

It made me curious, though. "How come you were never Klan?"

"Son, I'd sure like to be able to say something noble and good about that but the truth is I was never asked."

"Would you have joined if you'd been asked?"

Papa shrugged. "I hope not, but I don't know. If somebody asks you a question like that, there's no way to answer without making a stand. A stand against the Klan isn't very healthy." He shrugged again. "I'm just as happy I was never tested. It would have been an awful temptation to just go along. I like to think that's what happened to your cousin Joe."

He quit talking and I didn't know what to say, so the car was silent the rest of the way to Aliceville. I fell asleep after a while. I couldn't remember my dreams except there was leather in them, and faces that scared me. They made me uneasy when I woke up.

PAPA'S BRANCH OF THE KINDER FAMILY COMES FROM WECO KINDER, the first Kinder to cross the Atlantic. He came over from Germany as a Hessian and stayed after the Revolution. He moved first down to South Carolina, then west. Eventually, he ended up in Aliceville. His children moved away from him to Decatur, Huntsville, Guntersville, and the like. Weco's nephew came over later and settled up to New York, which is where Mama's family is from. The Kinder family reunion happened on the old Aliceville farm on the Fourth of July weekend every year. It was just a coincidence the reunion was 200 miles closer to Philadelphia than Huntsville but I didn't rest easy over it.

I guess all family reunions are strange to those outside the family. In my opinion, Kinder family reunions are strange by anybody's standards. The main rule is that family comes first over everything else. Nobody outside the family understood it. Heck, nobody inside the family understood it. Weco had owned slaves. His sons had owned slaves. Some of those slaves had been women and some of Weco's children and grandchildren had been born slaves. In spite of that, everybody came to the family reunion, colored or white. The colored congregated with the colored and the whites with the whites. I'd never thought about it before; it had always seemed natural. Uncomfortable, but natural. We never had a separate food line like in some restaurants but we did have two separate water cans and two separate restrooms. It had always seemed right, proper, and familiar before.

Joe Stillings sat at one end of the hall watching the colored tables. You could tell the Mississippi border wasn't far from his mind. The colored, for their part, kept quiet and to themselves, though I saw one or two young men stare back. Everyone knew Philadelphia wasn't very far away.

Papa introduced me to one man, black as coal, named Joe Kinder.

"We've been calling him 'Joe Boy' to keep him from being confused with our cousin Joe," Papa said, a shiny grin on his face.

I could feel cousin Joe's eyes boring through my back. Joe Boy Kinder was nearly the same age as Papa and didn't seem too pleased with his nickname.

"Please to meet you, sir," I said.

"Joe Boy works at the HIC Building," Papa said. I looked up at Papa in surprise, light dawning in my mind. "Beats picking cotton, doesn't it, Joe Boy?" Papa said. Joe Boy smiled thinly and nodded.

When I got my food, I looked around to see where to sit. The tables around Papa were filled and that gave me excuse enough to not sit with him. Standing there at the end of the hall, I couldn't see anybody I much wanted to sit with. The whites and coloreds were separated, as always, and it seemed like each group was going out of its way to avoid looking at the other group. I saw Joe Boy sitting a little away by himself, not part of either group, and, without thinking too much about it, I went over and stood across from him.

He looked startled.

"Can I sit here, please?" I said.

He nodded and I sat down. For a minute I could feel Joe Stilling's eyes boring into the back of my head. To heck with him. We were all family, right? Much as we would have liked to deny it.

I'd gotten through the chicken and started on the potato salad when Joe Boy spoke up. "I hear you like fossils?"

"Yes, sir," I said, thinking about the sinkhole. "Yes, sir, I do."

He looked over toward my father. "Your father's a good man," he said gently. "Even now, when times are troubled." He turned back to me and grinned a little shyly. "There are some pretty ones on my farm. There's a big limestone face near the house that's full of pretty pictures if you want to come over and see some time."

"Where is your farm, sir?"

"North of town near Hollow Road. Ever hear of the Devil's Racetrack?"

I stopped eating. "Yes, sir."

He picked up on that. He was as quick as Papa had said. "Got a little secret, eh? That's all right. My son had secrets of me, too."

"Where is your son, sir?"

He smiled. "Joined the Army just last month. Did his mother proud. She lives in Tennessee, now. He'll be out of basic training directly. He's a smart boy. He'll do well." He rose and gathered together his paper plate and cup. "My farm's up a little north of the Racetrack. You can come on by, if you like." He shook his head a little. "I'm not around during the week. I stay at my brother's place on Pulaski Pike since I have no car. But you can come over on the weekend." He nodded toward Papa. "If you're daddy will let you."

I didn't talk much more than that at the reunion. I was in a sweat to go home. Usually, I liked seeing my uncles, aunts, and cousins, but this time there wasn't much talking. Mostly, people just stared at each other and at the ground. Joe and his brothers got pretty drunk and started talking about how the Klan over in Mississippi did the right thing for all white folk. But my Dad and a couple of others hustled them out behind the white restrooms and talked to them a while. Pretty soon, I heard somebody down that way throwing up and that made me feel pretty easy. Nothing is so peaceful as a sick drunk. They're too miserable to get up and fight.

THE NEXT DAY WAS MONDAY AND PAPA WENT TO WORK. I FED THE animals and did my chores early and went into town to pick up the rope. After that, I packed a lunch and went back out to the Racetrack. Whatever cold or flu had been bothering me the last time I was here had eased some. Totem animals and Catholics. Funny what a body will think about when they get sick.

I tied the rope to a tree and let myself down slowly until I was standing on the Jurassic rock. The pile shifted and settled. That didn't make me feel very comfortable since the sinkhole went down another 20 feet or so. If I fell here, I could be shouting until Judgment Day before somebody heard me. I couldn't see what was holding up the pile so I couldn't tell how stable it was. I tied the rope around my chest so if I fell, I'd have half a chance to get back out. For a minute it was still and cool and the morning-moist limestone smelled dusty and old. The same sun had shone down this hole 80 million years ago. I closed my eyes and wondered what it smelled like. I didn't believe in ghosts but if there were, I hoped there were ghosts

of dinosaurs, huge and transparent, walking around me.

I shook my head. None of that was going to find me any fossils. I crouched down and got to work.

If there was anything here at all, it was under the rubble. So, first, I had to move about a half-ton of limestone. That took a while because I had to be careful. I didn't want to just toss the limestone down the sinkhole because I'd just have to move it again if I decided to look down there. Instead, I moved it over 10 feet or so and started a tall pile on one side of the ledge.

Pretty soon I could see I was getting close to pay dirt. The rock changed color from the white limestone to a sort of iron gray. This was Jurassic shale. Most of it was broken. By and by, I started to expose the ledge itself. I figured there had to be another section of limestone supporting the shale. Any animals that had fallen onto the ledge might have become fossilized over time. The ledge didn't seem all that stable now and I was glad I was on the rope.

Finally, I had the loose stuff all moved over. The ledge had to be more than six feet thick and 20 feet long, a cracked layer of shale over a supporting outcropping of limestone. It was dirty and dusty. I pulled out my brush and rock pick and started cleaning it to see what I had.

I came to a knob poking out of the rock. As I cleaned around it, its shape began to show itself. I pulled some water out of my pack and carefully cleaned around it. I didn't believe it. I took my flashlight and magnifying glass to make sure.

It was a big knob of bone. Only one kind of animal in the Jurassic had a bone that big: a dinosaur.

I sat back and looked around. I had no idea how big the fossil was. Was it just the bone or a whole skeleton?

I *had* to find out. I wanted to stay here for the next six weeks to chip it out but it was getting dark now and I had to go home. As I climbed out I kept planning and re-planning how I was going to expose the fossils on that ledge and get them out of there.

I looked down at the ledge. This was going to be tricky business. I not only had to remove the fossils I wanted, but also chip away at the ledge that was supporting it and me at the same time.

I was going to need help.

FIGURED I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO TALK TO PAPA ABOUT IT AND THAT made me glum. Now I would have to admit I'd as much as lied to him. Besides that, I wanted to keep it a secret for a while. It would be really great to bring the bones of some dinosaur downtown and take them to the university or something. So, I stalled for a couple of days and went to the library to see if I could find some techniques I could use.

I saw Chris Panini down there and we hung out at the Woolworth's. He wanted to go out to the Space Center. Normally, I don't see many people from school over the summer. At least, not since I was nine or so. My chores on the farm take up a lot of time and when that's done I go off into the woods chopping rocks. Truth is the other kids didn't have much interest in me. Chris was different. I'd met him in the fall when he started junior high. Fossils didn't hold his attention much but the Apollo program going on down at the Arsenal did. Doctor Panini had come all the way from Chicago to be in charge of the booster-testing project. Papa just ran a little group working on the bell housings. My Dad worked for a man who worked for a man who worked for a man who worked for Doctor Panini and Doctor Panini worked for a man who worked for Werner Von Braun. His office was way out on the Arsenal. Since Papa was a veteran and Chris was Doctor Panini's son, we could both get on base.

We caught the bus out to the Space Center. It was great going with Chris because everybody knew him. I got to climb around inside the Saturn I they had lying on its side, as big a rocket as I figured I would ever see. Chris said he thought he could get Doctor Panini to take us both out to see the big Saturn V booster test frame. I was pretty sure Papa would be in favor since he couldn't swing it on his own. In the back of my mind, I figured if things went well over the winter, Chris could bring me out to see one of the engine tests when

they started next year. Now that would be fine. The Saturn V booster was going to be six stories tall. Each of the five bells was the size of a room.

I was excited about this. Doctor Panini called up Papa the next day. He said we could come out in August when there was something to see. I could hardly wait.

CHRIS WAS ALL BUT JUMPING UP AND DOWN WHEN HE SAW THE sinkhole.

"Jesus!" he said. "It must go clear to the bottom of Devil's Hill!" I had to grab him to keep him from falling in. Being from Chicago, he didn't know a harness from a hoe so I had to show him how to tie the ropes and how to work his way down to the ledge. Even then, he wanted to dance around so I had to talk to him a while about what might happen if the ledge came out from under us. That sort of took the wind out of his sails.

That done, we started with chipping out the bone.

Everybody has this idea that fossil bones are just lying there in perfect articulation waiting for the right person to come by and dig them out. To be fair, there are a few stories like that. And if you trip over a rock in North Alabama, you're tripping over crinoid fossils.

More often, it's like what you'd expect if you thought about it. If a chicken dies in the forest, do you expect the bones to stay neatly in place? Of course not. Sure as cornbread, a coyote or a fox or a raccoon will come along and tear into the carcass of that chicken and spread it around pretty fine. Or, worse, that fox might take it for miles to his den, pull it inside, and worry it apart along with all of the bones and gristle of other meals. Now, you don't have just a chicken in the mix. You've got chicken, crow, and muskrat bones all mixed together. Come fossilization, if it happens at all, they all kind of get welded to one another so the rib of the muskrat is part of the same rock that's holding the neck of the chicken together. When you're chopping this stuff apart it might take a week just to separate out the rib and neck together from the rock, much less separate them from each other. Sometimes you can't separate stuff at all.

Still, I had high hopes for our site. We had a sinkhole here already so whatever fell in here probably just rotted and fell apart. That's what had happened at the Thomas Farm site. Not many animals come down into a pit to eat a carcass and some of them that do die themselves.

Chris turned out to be one of those people who like to talk while they work. Being from Chicago, as I said before, the topic most on his mind were those three civil rights workers in Mississippi. I got more news than I bargained for. Over the days I had to read the papers just to fight back.

By now the FBI was in it up to the elbows. Talking in the sinkhole, I started thinking of the civil rights workers as boys like us—they were grown men, I know it. But when you looked at their pictures they didn't look like men. They looked like the older kids I saw in the high school. I didn't have an older brother. It had always been just Papa and me. But I had cousins and some of those cousins had older brothers. The northern papers talked about them like they walked on water. Andy Goodman was "the young idealist"; Michael Schwerner was "the dedicated liberal." They didn't talk as much about Chaney for some reason.

All around town things had become so tense that being out at the Racetrack and working in a pit for eight hours felt like a day off. It was one of those things that were specifically left out of conversations. People wouldn't look at each other for fear somebody would bring it up.

Chris didn't mind bringing it up and bringing it up and bringing it up again. I guess it was a relief to me, too. Nobody likes to keep these things all bottled up inside, I guess. He asked all sorts of questions, once we were alone and in private. I wouldn't talk about it to him otherwise. He was ignorant, being from the North and all, and had no idea Huntsville was wound so tight. He said his mother was staying in Chicago because she was sick, so until he started working on the dig, he spent a lot of time on the base with his Dad. He

asked me questions and I answered them as best I could. Mostly, I had to keep him from going in the colored entrances to stores and such, which he did from pure forgetfulness. I wondered who did that for him when I wasn't around. Of course, he was on base a lot and I'd been told they did things differently out there.

Hundreds of sailors were brought into Mississippi to walk the Philadelphia swamps and dredge the Philadelphia lakes for the bodies. Every night there were pictures on the television. I got to thinking about where those sailors were stepping, into the nests of water moccasins, onto the heads of snapping turtles. All to find three bodies. It was enough to make a person sick. I've always hated water moccasins. I started having dreams where they were chasing me, where if they bit me I'd blow up and turn black like a burned balloon. I took my old stegosaurus doll from the shelf and started sleeping with it next to my bed. It made the dreams easier. Maybe there was something to totem animals after all. Something to Catholics, too, I suppose.

As July progressed, it seems I got wound just as tight as the town. It got to be well over a hundred degrees in the shade. It wasn't swamp water wet like it was in Mississippi, but it was wet enough. Like I said before, heat didn't usually bother me much. But I got to feeling like there was something jumping inside of me, trying its desperate best to break free. We hadn't worked on the dig more than a couple of hours, but Chris had to rest and I admit I was pretty ready to quit.

We had managed to chip out the original bone I found and it turned out to be a femur, nearly five feet long. It had been unattached to anything else so we'd begun to chip out little test sections trying to find more bones. Nothing so far and we were getting a little discouraged, though I kept telling myself a vertebrate fossil of any size in North Alabama was a major find.

At night, I took to sitting on the swing on the back porch, holding my little stegosaurus doll in my lap, staring out into the mosquitoes. I couldn't have said what I was thinking but my mind was bubbling like bad water.

ABOUT THREE WEEKS INTO THE MONTH, PAPA HAD TO GO AWAY FOR the night to work on the Kinder Trust. He didn't want to leave me, he said, but had to go. That day, Chris and I found something interesting. He'd managed to uncover a section of what looked like a rib and we'd commenced to chip along it both ways to see if it met up with vertebrae. I felt pretty good.

That night the light of the full moon filled the room. I thrashed and fidgeted and couldn't sleep until, the way it always happens, I fell into an uneasy, fitful doze.

IT WAS AS IF I HEARD SOMEBODY WHISPER TO ME: *THINK OF IT AS A dream.*

I was walking, low to the ground, great tall trees towering over me. The air was filled with the smell of spices and the sounds of rustling leaves. I turned my head and saw my tail, then the plates on my back. I looked down and saw my hands, blunt and flat to the ground, saw my feet were the same.

I walked around the house. It was dark and quiet. No, not too quiet. In the distance I heard a thrashing. It didn't sound like something I wanted to be around so I went back toward the barn. The full moon washed over a little clearing back there.

I felt incredibly light on my feet and limber.

I was dancing.

I jumped up with my hind legs and stood on my front feet. I could almost stand upright if I pushed with my hands. And I was hungry. I nibbled at the leaves and they tasted terrific. Too good to resist and I ate everything that smelled right. I had never felt so happy, so complete.

It wasn't hot and there were no mosquitoes, no flies. I had escaped. I was released. I was free.

I heard something. I turned around and heard something coming, a soft and irregular padding of feet. I faced where I thought it was

coming from and after a moment, it stopped. I waited for a while and nothing happened. I went back to eating and I heard sudden movement in the brush. Something came at me from the side and I shrank back and turned, holding my tail ready. Then, heavy, sudden footsteps, a cry, and a collision in front of me.

A big wolf tumbled across the clearing, sprang to his feet, and shot around behind me, getting ready to attack again. Again, a pounding on the earth and an allosaurus took the ground between me and the wolf.

The wolf howled. The allosaurus roared.

The wolf looked at me and I knew him. He bounded away into the brush.

The allosaurus turned to me and I knew him, too. He watched me for a moment as if I were his next meal. Then, he walked away into the night.

After a few moments, they were both forgotten.

I was *dancing*.

I WOKE UP NEAR DAYBREAK, LYING ON THE GROUND NEAR OUR BACK porch. I was covered with bug bites and chigger itch. And I was naked. That scared me. I sat up and looked up at the porch and Papa was sitting there, watching me. He was naked, too.

"Looks like its going to be a pretty day," he said and lit his cigarette.

"What happened?"

"You turned into an animal. You must remember that."

I shook my head. "I dreamed something. I was a stegosaurus."

Papa shook his head. "It was no dream. Your cousin Joe almost had you for lunch but I decided to stay around just in case, even though you're a little young for this," he said. "I wasn't expecting to have this conversation for another couple of years."

"I guess this isn't a dream, either."

Papa laughed. "No. Though I can see how you might come to that conclusion."

I walked over to him and sat next to him on the porch. "So, is this puberty?"

He chuckled. "Not quite. This just adds to the mix."

I shook my head. "Papa, what is going on?"

"Know what a werewolf is?"

"Somebody who changes to a wolf when it's the full moon." I shook my head. "What am I, then? A were-stegosaurus?"

"Yup. And I'm a were-allosaurus."

"This doesn't make a lot of sense."

Papa nodded. "No, it doesn't, does it? It's a family thing. A Kinder thing. Weco Kinder brought over more than his family from Friesland. He brought a quality his children inherited. Some Kinder imprint on an animal at an early age. A wolf, say. Or a bear."

"Or a stegosaurus."

"Yup. Or an allosaurus." He thought for a minute. "Some in the family say we are humans that become an animal. Others say the animal is our true self and the human is just a vessel for the spirit of the animal—like being a vessel for Christ, as they teach in church. I'm of two minds about it." He drew on his cigarette. "Anyway, after a youngster imprints on an animal, later in life the transformation manifests into that shape. Once a month for the rest of our lives. There are ways to prevent it but they take some work."

I thought about that. "Look, I know how I got..."

"Imprinted."

"Imprinted with a stegosaurus. How did it happen to you?"

Papa sighed. "Osteology of the carnivorous Dinosauria in the United States National Museum, with special reference to the genera *Antrodromus* (Allosaurus) and *Ceratosaurs*," *Bulletin of the United States National Museum*, volume 110, 1920. You're not the only one who got caught up with dinosaurs. After that, I read everything I could. When I was 15, I woke up in the middle of the night like this."

I didn't say anything for a minute. "Is it real? Do we change or do we *think* we change?" I had a horrible image of naked Kinders grunting and howling across the land thinking for all the world they were

animals with no one to tell them any different.

Papa laughed. "Oh, you're a smart one. Nothing thick between your ears. Abner Phelps, at least, thought we were real."

"You're Abner Phelps' crocodile?"

"I was 15 and had been changing over the spring for the first time and I came on top of him poaching deer. I didn't know much in that frame of mind but I knew he shouldn't have been there and I chased him over the south hill nearly back to his barn. Papa—my Papa, your grandfather—nearly tore my hide off about it the next day. I couldn't sit down for a week. And Abner never would shut up about it. I think Papa bought Abner's farm to make restitution."

"And Grandpa Baker?"

"Your grandfather was a traditionalist, I suppose. He was a wolf like Joe. Your grandmother was not Kinder. She was just a wonderful woman who loved her husband."

"Mama?"

Papa didn't speak for a moment. "Her family runs to cats, mountain lions and the like. She was as pretty a cougar as you'd ever see. We used to run together just for the fun of it until you came along. When a Kinder gets pregnant, she loses the ability to change for a while. We missed our nights, then. Once a month running with the moon. She was always faster than I was." He stopped for a minute, thinking about Mama. "She always used to say you would be worth it. She was right about that, though she didn't live to see it. You were born under a full moon—a difficult birth time for a Kinder. She didn't survive it."

He shook his head. "There's a lot of stuff I have to tell you before you're grown. There are not exactly rules but principles you have to remember. There's land use and the Kinder Trust. You'll likely have to buy land for yourself someday. If you don't like this place, that is."

"This place is fine," I said slowly.

"We'll see in a few years. Might be too small by then. That's what the Kinder Trust is for. But there's time enough for that. For now, enjoy it. Stay on the land and play. It'll do you good."

I thought of cousins I had met at family reunions, people I knew. "Does this happen to Joe Boy Kinder?"

He drew on the cigarette. "We're not that close."

After a while, I asked: "Why does it happen at all?"

Papa shook his head. "I don't know." He stubbed out his cigarette. As he spoke, the sun rose.

"I told you it was going to be a pretty day," Papa said. "Come on in and get washed up."

THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAVING AN ANIMAL TOTEM AND BEING an animal totem. I put my stegosaurus doll back on the shelf and slept like a baby.

The next night I went out again, this time with Papa. Papa and I walked over most of the hills and fields of the land so he could mark it. You can imagine how he did that; I shouldn't have to paint a picture. We couldn't speak. It was like a very clear, very intelligent

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ble dream. I didn't even really know who it was I was following—by all rights I should have been scared to death of an allosaurus. Even in a dream, I could tell he was safe.

Afterward, I went to the clover field and ate as much as I could. It was delicious.

"That way," he said, explaining the marks over breakfast, "Joe will know when he comes on the land. Know in his animal self—he wouldn't have attacked you if he'd been thinking. You'll know when you're on his land as well. All Kinders have the right to run on other Kinders' land when they're in change. But it's still better to keep predators and prey apart." Papa was thoughtful for a few minutes. "Maybe we should, too. A young stegosaurus would make a tasty meal for me."

"You wouldn't."

"Probably not. But it would be a great way to punish a teenager." He took a bite of eggs and washed it down with coffee. "Things'll get more clear for you as time goes on. That's always a problem with us. It's too easy to identify with your animal. You wouldn't have become a stegosaurus if it didn't speak to something deep inside of you. Joe's the same way about being a wolf. It's hard to keep it from just consuming you."

"I can't figure him out," I said, changing the subject.

"Who?"

"Joe Stillings. Why is he Klan?"

Papa didn't say anything for a long minute. "What you're really saying is that something terrible happened over in Mississippi. It was done by the Klan. How could Joe, your cousin, be part of that?"

"I guess."

"I don't know."

"You're a big help."

He laughed. "I'll get to be less and less help as you get older, too. You can count on that." He chuckled again. "It's a hard problem, Joe has a wife he is just crazy about. He's got a three-year-old daughter he would die for anytime, anywhere. He's a good farmer. He takes care of his animals—better than most, I think. Maybe that comes from being a Kinder. He's strong in the church. He takes Christian giving seriously. He plants a field of corn a year to give to the poor. He does it through his church. A lot of that corn goes to colored folks. You remember Jim and Veronda Wheeler, the colored couple that live on the other side of him—who are not Kinder, in case you're wondering and keep out of their soybeans. Veronda took sick when she was going to have her baby. Jim Wheeler came to Joe because he didn't have a car. Joe drove her to the colored clinic at a hundred miles an hour because the ambulance doesn't come out this far. You have to add that into his being Klan. It might be just as true for the Klan over in Philadelphia."

"You mean that makes it OK?"

Papa shook his big head slowly. "Of course not. If Hitler had been nice to his kids, would that have made any difference? Understanding someone doesn't automatically mean you approve of them. You asked me why he's Klan. I'm telling you I don't know."

"I don't understand."

"Neither do I."

"Now, I *really* don't understand."

"I'm saying that a man can be all of these things at once." Papa looked at me. "The evil is alloyed with the good. I've known Joe since he was born. The same man that tore up the roads taking Veronda to the colored clinic goes to Klan meetings to keep her from getting a proper hospital. I don't understand it. I never did. Is Joe stupid? Obviously not. This clearly has nothing to do with intelligence. Is he an evil man? Papa shook his head again. "I don't know how to look into a man's soul. How could I know that? Does he do evil acts? Absolutely. Does that make him evil? Maybe." He drew on his cigarette and exhaled slowly. "Truth of the matter is some of us turn into animals at night. Some of us turn into monsters." Papa's eyes fell into shadow as he turned to watch the rising sun. "Jesus said hate the sin and love the sinner. He must have understood things better than I do."

PUT CHRIS OFF FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS SO I COULD GET SOME SLEEP. Being a stegosaurus at night had pretty much run me ragged, not to mention thinking about what it all meant. At least I knew why the Kinder family reunion was the way it was. If you turned into an animal once a month, who else would you turn to but your own family, white or colored?

When we finally got back to the dig Chris was pretty quiet. At first, I didn't notice. I was getting pretty excited about the skeleton. We had followed two ribs up into some kind of sedimentary nodule I wasn't familiar with. I was nervous about trying to chip through—it might shatter and then where would we be? When we tried to get in from the other side we didn't find anything. These were probably ribs that had become detached from the vertebrae. So we had made some different exploratory sections and in the last one, we had found another rib, a big one.

At this point we didn't know if we had more than one animal here. There could have been a pile of bodies at the bottom of the sink-hole when it closed up, for all we knew. This rib was much larger than the others but it was also a fair distance away. That was no proof of the animal's size, of course. But if it hadn't been disturbed too much, and it was a single animal, and the little ribs were the back ribs and this new rib was one of the big center ribs, then we were looking at a distance of about four feet between the center rib and the back rib. The animal might have had a rib cage of eight feet or so. Add in three feet or so for distance from the end of the ribs to the beginning of the tail and we had an animal that could have been perhaps 11 feet from shoulders to vent. The tail could easily have been the same length, making the animal 22 or so feet long excluding the neck and head.

We chipped in two directions again, from the exposed bone toward the ends. I told Chris to chip in the probable direction of the vertebrae—he had a more delicate touch than I did. Maybe it was because he had smaller hands.

As I exposed the rib I began to appreciate its actual size. It was perhaps two inches wide and about as thick. It didn't have the delicate look of some of the carnosaurus I'd seen at the museum in New York. This rib looked like it carried weight, as if it belonged to a quadruped like a bull or a brontosaurus. Carnosaurs always stood on two legs and the ribs didn't carry so much load.

Anyway, I had high hopes for this fossil so I didn't notice Chris's unusual silence.

Finally, he dropped the dentist pick and leaned back against the limestone wall closing his eyes.

"I hate this place," he said.

I put down my brush and dusted off my hands. "Really? I thought you were having fun."

"Oh, I don't mean right here, right now." He snorted. "I mean, it's not that I like the ticks and the snakes. Or the poison ivy. Or the mosquitoes. Or the big fog trucks you need down here to kill the mosquitoes. Or the chiggers." He shook his head. "You know, I could have lived my entire life without ever learning what a chigger was."

"They don't have poison ivy up in Illinois?"

"That's not the *point*." He looked up at the sky. "Or the heat—and it *does* get hot in Chicago. But up there when it hits a hundred everybody says, 'Jesus, it's hot.' Down here they say, 'Boy, you ain't seen nothing yet.' He spread his arms. "At least here, 20 feet down in a hole in the ground it's a little cooler."

"It's a lot cooler here," I said. "I mean it can't be over 90."

"That's not the *point*."

"Then, what is the *point*?"

He wiped his forehead with his hand and looked at the resulting mud on his hand speculatively. "I mean I hate the South," he said quietly. "Have you heard what's going on in Mississippi?"

"Something new happened in Philadelphia?" I moved over in the shade. "Did the FBI find something?"

"No. Nothing happened. Nothing happened at all." He didn't say anything for a minute. "I don't understand any of this. Does every-

body feel this way underneath? Is what happened in Mississippi just what shows?"

"No," I sat back. "It's not the same everywhere. My family has whites and coloreds in it. We get along but that's about as much as you can say about it."

He stared at me. "You have Negroes in your family?"

I nodded. "Sometimes slave owners had their way with the slaves. Children come of such things."

"That's sick."

"You don't get children the same way up north?"

"That's not what I meant and you know it." He stopped. "Families are supposed to stick together."

I didn't mention what held my particular family together.

In a moment, he softened. "Heck," he said with a hollow laugh. "My Uncle Carmine did something when he and my Dad were kids. They haven't spoken for 30 years. Nobody knows what happened. The only reason I even know about him is because my Mom insisted on introducing me at Gram's funeral. Dad wouldn't talk to him even then. Even families fall apart."

I nodded.

He leaned back against the cool limestone. "My dad says they know all about it. The sheriff, the mayor, the preachers. Everybody knows what happened. Nobody's talking." He looked up at me. "Nobody."

"Folks are scared."

"Look, you're from the South." He pointed at me. "If three people were murdered in your backyard, wouldn't you tell the FBI when they came around?"

I thought about it. "Maybe."

Chris threw up his hands. "Maybe."

"You got to understand a couple things." I felt like I was talking to a kid. Maybe up north they didn't explain things early enough. "I don't know how it is up in Chicago. But down here people do what they say they're going to do. If somebody says they're going to punch your head in for saying 'boo' to them, then you got to expect to get your head punched in when you say 'boo.' When somebody in Mississippi says if a bunch of northerners come down and stir things up somebody's going to get killed, then when a bunch of northerners come down you got to expect somebody to die."

"That makes it right?"

"I didn't say anything about right or wrong." I stared at him. "I'm talking about how things are. You all have never understood that about us. You didn't understand it back in 1860 and you don't understand it now. I'll tell you why nobody in Philadelphia is saying a word. Some don't care about what happens to two northerners and a nigger. Some are proud of it. The rest know—because they've been told—that if they talk they stand a considerable chance of getting killed."

"What about the sheriff?" Chris said quietly.

"What about him?"

"He ought to enforce the law."

"He is enforcing the law they live by. That law says if the Klan tells you somebody's got to die you got to either be somewhere else when it happens or be a part of it. How do you think it all happened?"

"You think he was part of it?"

I closed my eyes and shook my head. Sometimes I thought Chris was thick as pudding. "I'm 13 years old. I'll be 14 in three months. I don't read many papers except when they have something to do with fossils. And even I know the Klan is all through this state even up to the governor. Just by reading the papers, I know that Sheriff Rainey knew everything that happened in Neshoba County that night, including this murder."

"They were just—well, not kids. But not that much older than we are."

I didn't know what to say about that. "You're taking this kind of hard. After all, they're a couple of hundred miles away. They're no kin to you. What do you care?"

"Do you have family there?"

"I don't know much about the Mississippi side of the family," I said carefully. "It's not too far from Aliceville so maybe I do." I didn't like the line of this conversation. "They'd be pretty distant relations if I did."

"What if you were related to one of them?" He insisted. "What if Cecil Price was your cousin? Or if Sheriff Rainey was your uncle? How would you feel?"

I got to thinking about Papa and Joe Boy and Joe Stillings. Maybe Joe Stillings could have been Cecil Price. "I don't know. I sure wouldn't be proud of them. There is nothing in this whole business to be proud of."

"Not even the ones that got killed?"

"I didn't have any answer to that. I pushed myself up and picked up my brush. 'Let's get back to work.'"

THAT NIGHT I MADE DINNER FOR BOTH PAPA AND I. WHILE WE WERE eating, we got a phone call. Papa came back to the table frowning.

"Who was it?"

Papa carefully cut up his baked potato. "Joe Stillings. He wants to come over in a bit."

"That didn't make me feel good. 'How come?'"

"To apologize for attacking you, I expect."

The look on his face made me doubt that but I didn't say anything and went back to my meal.

After a while, he said, "Be best for you to go up to your room when he gets here."

I nodded. The grille on the floor in my room picked up conversation in the living room pretty well. I had never mentioned this to my father since it came in handy at times like this.

Joe came over about nine or so, when twilight was blowing through the trees.

"Hi, Brian," he said, looking a little nervous. "Sorry about the other night."

I smiled. "It's OK."

"Yeah," he said and clapped me on the arm. "Guess I'll be seeing you sometimes on full-moon nights."

"I expect." I smiled again and excused myself. Up in my room I quietly moved the clothes hamper. Then, I moved my big balsa wood stegosaurus model and the table it was on and lay down with my ear to the grille. Maybe totems had some luck to them. I hoped so. I had a bad feeling about Joe coming over.

They talked about the weather first. Then Joe offered to help harvest the east field that bordered his land. Papa thanked him but said they'd have to see come fall. This sort of conversation went on for 10 or 20 minutes and I almost fell asleep when Joe spoke up.

"Are you familiar with the current northern invasion that is happening in Philadelphia, Mississippi?"

"No," said Papa. "What has the Grand Army of the Potomac done now?"

"Uncle David—"

"Joe," Papa interrupted. "No speeches. I've known you since you were born. Say what you have to say."

Joe didn't say anything for a minute but I heard the awkward scrape of his chair as he made himself comfortable. "Some of the Brethren have been saying we should do something up here, right in the heart of Johnson country, in support of our Brothers in Philadelphia."

Papa didn't say anything for a moment. "What sort of thing? Murder?"

"It's not called murder," said Joe slowly. "It is called elimination."

"Spare me."

"No elimination has been proposed. Just something to show the people of Mississippi we support them."

"What did you have in mind?"

"You have a boy working for you—"

"Oh, Christ."

"You have a boy working for you down in the Apollo project," Joe

continued doggedly. "It is criminal for a nigger to be interfering with the sending of good, white officers into space. He should be taught a lesson."

"I see."

From the sound of the chair, I could tell Joe was leaning back. "At this time, Uncle David, we would like to extend the hand of fellowship to you."

"You want me to join the Klan?"

"The white race needs you."

Papa was silent for a good long time. "It makes no difference to you that Joe Boy is your kin? The family means nothing to you?"

"We shouldn't be bound by the indiscretions of the past."

"Does that mean on the next full-moon night, when you're running across my land after my chickens, I should shoot you? Good God, Joe. Even if you forget the stupidity of the Klan, Joe Boy has the same Kinder blood that you have. Both of you run under the moon."

"There are a lot of coloreds with white blood in them. Sometimes even whites lost their head in the old days."

"I know that. Hell, I think half the South is kin to one another,

black and white together—something you ought to take a little more seriously. But we're not talking about some anonymous Negro. We're talking about Joe Boy Kinder, who's been going to family reunions as long as you have. What are you going to do, then? Shoot him in the back of the head and bury him up on Monte Sano? Castrate him? Beat him blind?"

I knew by the scrape of the chair, Papa had stood up.

"No, by God. I never wanted this. You know how Joe Boy got that job? Because he deserved it. You know who went to bat for him? I did. And I'll be damned if I'm going to help some white trash in sheets take it away. You offer me a Klan membership? I spit on it. I can't help everyone but I can help my own. You want to go hurt some poor defenseless colored boy, you go on to Scottsboro or Guntersville or some other place away from here where you don't have any

kin. You try it around here and next time there's a full moon, I'll stay human and shoot you through your wolf heart."

I heard the door open.

"Now, good night to you."

I heard Joe as he left the house.

A minute later, I heard Papa's heavy tread on the stairs. He opened the door to my room.

His face was red and his eyes were blazing. I'd never seen him like this.

"You've been listening to the whole thing, I reckon. Get dressed. You ought to be there for the rest of it."

I got my pants on quick as thinking and a minute after that we were in the car on the way to town. It started to rain. We turned on to Pulaski Pike and headed slowly south.

Maybe every town has a street like the Pike, just outside of downtown. You couldn't really call these places houses or homes. They were mostly made of strapping and tarpaper with discarded tin for a roof. There were outhouses in the back and I didn't think any of them had water, though there might have been a hand pump somewhere. Every storm about half of them blew down and had to be

rebuilt the next day. I'd never stopped here but I saw it every time I took the bus.

Papa used a big flashlight to find the right spot. There were several folks staring back at us, stuck in the light and looking scared. When he found the right one, he pulled off the road and stopped.

We went up to one shack and knocked on the frame. A nigger answered and stood there blinking at us.

"Is Joe here?" he asked.

The nigger nodded and disappeared. A moment later Joe Boy came out.

"Joe Boy—" Papa began, then stopped and looked down a minute, collecting his thoughts. Papa looked him in the face. I knew then something had changed for Papa. He would never use such words ever again.

"Joseph," he started over. "I've been given word that you might be in danger. The Klan might be involved. You should—" He stopped again. "I would like to offer you the safety of my home."

Joseph looked inside and back to Papa and at that moment I was so proud to be related to the both of them. "Thank you, Mister Baker—"

"David," corrected my father. "My name is David."

"Mister Baker," repeated Joseph, firmly. "I thank you. I believe I'll stay here tonight."

Papa nodded. "All right. Would you care for some company?"

"That would be a kindness."

The inside of the shack looked the same as the outside. The water leaked in around the staples holding down the tarpaper but the tin roof was sound. At least there was no water dripping on our heads. Joseph gave us the two chairs in the place. I hoped it was because we were guests and not because we were white. He introduced his brother Damascus to us. Papa told him about what Joe Stillings had said. We didn't talk much and the night wore on.

I WOKE UP IN THE EARLY HOURS. PAPA WAS ASLEEP NEXT TO ME ON THE straw bed. Damascus was asleep on a blanket on the floor. I got up and stepped over him and past the curtain. Joseph was sitting in one of the chairs reading by a kerosene lamp. I felt I was back a hundred years.

"Early morning to you." He put a marker in the book—by now I could see it was a Bible. "Aren't you sleepy?"

"No." I looked back toward Papa. "I think my Dad would be upset to wake up and see Damascus sleeping on the floor."

"I don't believe Damascus could sleep easy next to a white man," Joseph chuckled. "Leave them be."

I sat across from him. A piece of oiled paper served as a window and Joseph eyed it critically.

"I don't believe Mister Stillings is going to come for me this evening," he said at last. "But let's not encourage him." He blew out the lamp and pulled away some of the paper so we could see outside.

Outside the sky had cleared and the waning moon had risen. The light through the remaining oilpaper gave the room a dim glow like heated iron.

"Mister Kinder," I said. "I don't know how to ask you this."

"Speak, child. There are no secrets in the house of my brother or my own."

"What do you turn into on the full moon?"

"I have lived in Huntsville all of my life." I could see his eyes and little else by the light from the oilpaper. "My brother and I were raised out on the same farm where we were born on. Damascus lives here and picks cotton on the farm during the summer and does odd jobs in town over the winter. He only comes home for the full moon where he transforms into a handsome lion. I kept the farm. I became educated and an engineer and work with my mind. Each month I turn into a silverback gorilla."

I shook my head. Deacon Goodman's ape. I wondered how many other stories had some truth to them.

I didn't know exactly what to say. "You turn into an ape?" I looked

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around the room. "That's what white people say nigras—" I stopped myself. If Papa could do it, so could I. "—Negroes are."

"You see the irony of it," Joseph laughed. "You never know what will capture your heart, do you? A circus came through Huntsville when I was perhaps four or five or younger. I snuck away from my parents and hid in the urine and stench underneath the animal cages. The cats knew I was there and snarled at me through the floor of their cages and I fled to find a quiet spot in the dark. After a while, my eyes adjusted and I could see him lying in the corner, one arm over his eyes. He didn't move as I came closer. Before I could move, he jumped to the edge of the cage and struck the bars before my face. I fell down, paralyzed. He stared at me, reached through, and picked me up. He brought me to his face, staring at me. His one hand reached clear around my chest. His skin was blacker than mine and though he lived in a cage, he was a King."

"He must have stared at me for a minute or more. He saw my whole life in his eyes and held it in his hand," Joseph stopped and shook his head. "Then, he set me down and sat across from me. He played with me through the bars until I heard Damascus calling me. He turned away from me and went to the back of his cage. Damascus found me, crying, and took me back to our parents. I have felt those eyes and hands upon me ever since. When I was 15 on a cold January night, I woke up with such eyes and hands of my own."

I was impressed. "Wow. I just saw the *Sтегоsaurus* bones in New York."

He chuckled. "It makes a good story, doesn't it? I left out the part where I wet myself when he picked me up. Doesn't seem to fit, somehow."

JOE STILLINGS DIDN'T SHOW UP THAT NIGHT. PAPA HOPED THAT IN THE light of day, knowing that we had stayed the night with Joseph and Damascus, Joe might decide to leave them alone. I asked him how he thought Joe might know where we spent the night but he wouldn't say.

We drove back to the house in the early morning light. Everything looked washed off and clean. Even Papa smiled.

"Is Joseph safe now?" I asked.

Papa shrugged. "Maybe a little safer. Maybe things will get a little better." He yawned and stretched his back out against the seat. "Everybody has to fight for what they want an inch at a time. Me, Joe, you. None of us are any different. Later, after things settle down, people only see they moved an inch and forget how hard an inch that was. What we think of as the big things are only fractions of that inch. Most things are like that. Nothing is really dramatic or final. Life just moves on one inch at a time."

He grinned at me. "Like making a fossil, I guess."

I nodded.

PHIRS AND I HAD EXPOSED MOST OF THE RIB BY NOW AND IT LOOKED intact. We were working on where we hoped the spinal column was. Chris didn't mention the three boys in Mississippi anymore. He looked like he wasn't getting much sleep. I figured I'd wait a while to see if he'd want to bring it up.

As the rib curved (we hoped) toward the vertebrae, we had to dig deeper. I'd changed my mind about this fossil by now. I figured there must have been a mud slide that buried the skeleton before it fully came apart. This rib looked like the animal was lying on its side. If the skeleton had come apart, the rib would have slid to one side or the other. Chris thought it was pretty far-fetched.

"Let's see," he said. "This guy falls down the sinkhole, rots down nearly to a skeleton but not quite. Then a mud slide comes along and buries him. After that, the top caves over and seals him in. Everything fossilizes. A hundred million years later, the water starts flowing again and this time eats away everywhere but the ledge, because most of the ledge isn't limestone, and then the top caves in and opens the whole thing up. Pretty convenient. Does it always take that kind of luck to make a fossil?"

"A lot of them," I said. "You got to figure making a fossil is pretty

far-fetched to begin with. All animals die but only a few become fossils. We only get the lucky bits and pieces. It's like we're looking into the past through a six-foot pipe stuck in concrete. We only get to see those things that happen to walk by."

Since the rib was angling down, I took over that job and Chris started chipping down where we hoped the vertebrae were. The middle of the second day of this, Chris stopped.

"Brian?" he said in a funny voice.

"Yeah?" I looked up.

"You better see this."

His hole was about six inches deep and a foot square. In the middle he had excavated the stone around something that looked like a wedge coming out of the earth.

"It's a big alien," he said. "Just like in the movies."

I looked at it a long time before I said anything. There are moments where you just don't want to say something out loud for fear it will disappear. I thought, this is how those people feel in church, when the preacher says come down to the altar and give yourself up to Jesus.

"No, Chris," I said softly. "That is the dorsal tip of the vertebral plate of a *stegosaurus*."

"No!"

"Look at the shape. You remember the skeleton I built at home? When we get the rock away from it, you'll see. It'll be triangular."

We worked at it together for maybe four hours until the light started to go. By then, it stuck up over a foot and we'd found the attachment to the vertebrae.

"This is just the biggest thing," I said. "Nobody's ever found a dinosaur in North Alabama."

Chris grinned at me and clapped me on the shoulder. We pulled ourselves out of the sinkhole and went home.

Over the next couple of days, we managed to chip out the top of two more plates. I was scared to go deeper for fear we'd break them. We had done something pretty fine, even so. It was getting time to go up to the university. Chris and I stood on the edge of the sinkhole and looked down. We grinned at one another. We felt mighty proud.

THEY FOUND THE BODIES THE NEXT DAY. I DON'T EXPECT I'LL EVER forget the date as long as I live: August 4, 1964. There were pictures in all the newspapers and on the TV. It was enough to make you sick. They were buried in a dam. The FBI said they found the bodies with the help of "informants."

Papa didn't say much about it as we watched but I heard him swear under his breath the whole time. I don't think I ever heard my Daddy swear before. They showed Cecil Price and Sheriff Rainey looking smug and self-satisfied.

Chris called me on the phone.

"You heard?" he asked without saying hello.

"I'm looking at it now on television."

"Who would do such a thing?"

I thought about Joe Stillings. "I couldn't tell you."

Chris fell silent on the other end of the line.

"When do you want to go up to the university?" I asked. "I figure we should take some pictures."

"Tomorrow, I guess. At least we can take the pictures tomorrow."

By now the forest between the bus stop and the Racetrack was familiar. Over the summer we had made a little trail from the bus stop all the way to the top of Devil's Hill.

But when we looked down, the ledge was gone. Forty feet below there was a whole new layer of stone. The ledge must have crashed down in the night.

"Jesus," I said. "We were right to wear the ropes all this time."

"Yeah," said Chris.

I looked over at him. He didn't seem disappointed. "What's the matter with you? This was our whole summer!"

Chris nodded. "I know." He turned to me. "You know what they

Continued on page 88



A Hunter's Ode to His Bait

Make no mistake—love has its price.
Often it's higher than you might want to pay,
but it's what you count as valuable that determines it.

"You're sure she's untouched?"

"For God's sake yes. She's just a girl."

Duncan took the girl's face in his hands, tilted her head back, pried apart her lips, and had a look at her teeth. Her frightened gaze darted between him and her mother. "Doesn't mean anything. There are whores younger than her."

She was 12 or 13, small and thin for her age, but healthy—good teeth, straight back. In a year or so, with a few good meals in her, she'd be a beauty with golden hair and clear eyes.

Her mother stood a few steps away, wringing her hands and trying to maintain a businesslike lack of expression. "I've heard men pay more for virgins."

"You heard right," Duncan said. "But you already agreed to my price. I'll take her." He tossed the pouch of silver at the woman. It landed at her feet, and she hurried to pick it up. Her husband was dead and she had eight other children to feed.

He went to where he'd tied his horse to a fence post. "Get your cloak, girl, and come on."

Barefoot, she stood in the dirt in front of the hovel and didn't move. "I don't have a cloak."

"Eleanor, go on." Her mother gestured, brushing her away like she was a wild dog.

She still didn't move, so Duncan picked her up and set her at the front of his saddle. He mounted behind her, wheeled his horse around, and rode off without a backward glance. She didn't struggle or cry at all, which worried him at first. Perhaps she was an idiot child.

Then she said, "What's a whore?"

He considered how to answer. The less she knew about such things the better, so he said nothing.

He kept her steady with an arm across her shoulders, and she was limp in his grasp.

In three days they reached the wilds of Northumbria, plunging straight into a forest of twisted oak. What few local folk there were would not enter the place because they said it was haunted. Duncan made camp in a glade where a spring flowed clear. He set the girl on the ground and left her huddled in the crook formed by an immense protruding root. He'd bought a cloak for her, and boots.

Late that afternoon, just before dusk, he took her to a glen dipped in the shadow of a hill. He carried his longbow, a quiver of

arrows with varnished shafts, and his sword. He set about building a blind, a crawl space shadowed with leaves and branches that allowed a view of the whole clearing. The girl watched him with her wide, blue eyes and slack, numb face.

He bade her sit on a grassy hillock. She began to tremble, clutching the edges of her cloak and hugging herself. For a moment he doubted. What was he doing, paying silver for a slip of flesh and then dragging the poor girl out here? The prize, remember the prize. This would work.

"Don't be frightened," he said, putting a hand on her shoulder. "I'll be over there. Sit quietly, and the beast will appear. When it does, calm it."

"What beast?"

"You'll see."

He left her and went to his blind.

Wind shivered through the trees, sending autumn leaves raining. One landed on the girl's cloak, and she brushed it off. Duncan held his bow with an arrow notched and watched all around the glen. Every whisper of leaves he took for footsteps.

Her fear passed with the time. She scratched at the dirt with a stick, played with the edges of her cloak. She started humming a country jig, a little off-tune. Over the next few days, Duncan kept the girl warm and fed, and she never complained.

After a week of sitting in the cold, the creature came.

It stepped out of the trees, out of the twilight mist, head low to the ground and nostrils quivering. A silver shadow in the form of a horse, seemingly made of mist itself. The long, spiral horn growing from its forehead reflected what little light remained in the world and seemed to glow.

The girl's gasp carried all the way to Duncan's blind. The unicorn's head lifted, ears cricked forward hard, and he feared that she'd startle the thing away. But no, her scent was strong, and its instinct was powerful. Instead of cringing in fear, she got to her knees and reached toward it with both hands, whispering to it.

It leaned toward her, like a horse would to a bucket of grain. It made careful, silent steps, not even rustling the fallen leaves. Its thick mane fell forward, covering its neck. It huffed quick breaths at her, stretching forward to sniff at her fingers. The girl cupped her hands. The unicorn rested its muzzle on her palms and sighed.

Duncan shot his arrow, striking the creature's neck.

It screamed, a piercing wail, and reared straight up like it might fly. Duncan shot again and hit the crook of its throat, where the head joined the neck. Twisting in midair, it tried to leap back to the shelter of the woods, crying with strained breaths. After one stride it fell, chest plowing into the earth, head and horn still raised. Groaning, it rolled to its side.

He didn't know how much it would take to kill it. The stories were vague on that point. Heart racing, Duncan drew his sword and approached. The thing shuddered, sighed quietly, the sound of air leaving a bellows. He sprang at it, driving his blade into its side, through its heart, but it didn't move again. Dark stains ran from all three wounds, matted the hair of its mane and coat.

His hands were trembling. He'd done it. Bracing his foot against the unicorn's ribs, Duncan pulled out the sword, stumbling back and dropping it. Its horn was a foot long. Worth a fortune. He took his hunting knife, and it occurred to him that no one would believe where the horn came from if he didn't take the whole head.

Belatedly, he looked at the girl.

She huddled on the ground, covering her head with her hands. Slowly, her face emerged. She stared at the dead unicorn, blood congealing on its side.

"You did well," he said, attempting gentleness. His voice shook.

This was another part he had not thought to plan for—what would she do after? He expected sobbing. But she merely gathered her cloak around her and got to her feet. She seemed older, wrapped in the gloom of the forest, mist-glow turning her hair silver.

She stepped to the body, knelt by its head, and pressed her hand to its cheek. Quickly, she drew away. "It's already cold."

"It's just a beast," he said. "Just a hunt."

He started cutting, and she moved out of the way.

As he cut the final strand of muscle joining the head to the neck, the body began to shrivel, drying up, turning to dust, blowing away piece by piece. The girl put her hands in it, clutching the ashlike powder and opening her empty hands as it faded to nothing.

"It was beautiful," she said.

Fleanor gave a final tug on the cord that secured the bundle to the pack horse. The mass of it was awkward, wrapped tight in oiled skin. A long, thin piece jutted out, lying flat along the horse's flank. It was the head of their ninth unicorn.

She'd grown like a weed the past five years. Regular meals worked wonders. Duncan kept her fed, and she put on weight, developing healthy curves and roses in her cheeks. He bought a horse for her, along with the pack horse. They made quite the little company now, a world of change from when he stalked the woods alone.

She scratched the pack-horse's ear and went to kick dirt on the last embers of their campfire. "Do we ride far tonight?"

"Yes. I'd like to cross the border without guards watching. And—these woods are angry, I think." It was spring, but the trees still looked like skeletons, black shapes against the sky, reaching for him. He'd made a habit of killing magic, old magic, and he found himself looking over his shoulder more and more these days. "Will you be all right?"

"Of course." She said it sharply, but when he looked, she was smiling, watching him as she tightened her saddle's girth.

Of course she'd be all right, living wild in the wood and traveling like a bandit as she had. He avoided civilization as much as possible, kept her away from towns with their taverns, from people who might say a corrupting word. She was still pure; the unicorns still came to her.

They left the road before they reached the border and cut overland, picking their way through the ruins of the old Roman wall. No one saw them, and they stopped before dawn to rest.

In two days they reached their destination, where a wealthy lowland chieftain bought the horn, then opened his hall for a feast in honor of the hunter. Duncan relented. They wouldn't stay long.

Eleanor, wearing a simple gown of green wool, hair tied up in a braid, stood with him, untroubled by the great hall, the gold, the rich folk, and the stares. She had never been very excitable, but there was more to it than that. She was a creature of nature and didn't know to be wary here. She stood calmly, chin lifted, meeting every gaze that came to rest on her, refusing to be cowed by the noble company. She only gave a nod to the chieftain himself. They all saw she was proud, haughty even, and a wild beauty showed through with that pride. How had she learned to carry herself so, this waif from the hove?

She glanced at him out of the corner of her eye and smiled.

He hadn't trimmed his beard or combed his hair to appear before the chieftain. His clothes were clean at least, but they were still hunting clothes, leather breeches and jerkin. And he, who slew unicorns, owed them no obeisance.

Then he knew: she'd learned by watching him.

That evening, he allowed himself more ale than he usually drank, to help chase away the shadows lurking at the edges of his thoughts. Sitting at the high table with the chieftain's men, he listened to conversation play around him. He only answered when someone spoke his name and woke him from his reflections.

"Duncan. The lord has given you a quarter of his wealth for that horn. You could live nobly on that."

"I hunt again in the morning," he said.

Laughing, the courtier said, "But why? You're rich, aren't you?" Several times over in fact, but he kept the money hidden. "You're a beautiful woman at your beck and call—"

Before Duncan could turn on the man to correct him of this notion, an older fellow with a white beard leaned over. "He doesn't do it for the wealth. That's what you don't understand. He does it for the

power, to be able to turn his nose up at lords."

"And the girl?" the overloud courtier said. "Don't tell me you've never even touched her."

"You fool, of course he hasn't," said the older one. "She's the bait." Across the hall, Eleanor was dancing with the chieftain's youngest son, a handsome lad of 20 with far more charm than Duncan liked. She didn't know the steps, and he was teaching her. She stumbled—Duncan had never in the past few years known her to stumble. The boy caught her waist, and she laughed. Then he took her hand and raised it to his lips.

Duncan set down his mug and climbed around the table.

He marched across the hall directly toward Eleanor and the boy, scattering the figures of the dance. The fiddler stopped playing, the drummer lost his beat, and the whole hall fell silent. Folk cleared a space for him.

Planting a hand on the young lord's chest, Duncan shoved him away and stood between him and Eleanor. He didn't say a word, only glared, and the boy backed into the protection of the crowd.

Duncan put his hand on the back of Eleanor's neck and turned her toward the door.

"Never even think of it," he said, hissing into her ear.

"What are you—"

"If he gets what he wants from you, you become useless to me."

She ducked out of his grasp. "It was only a kiss—"

"A kiss leads to other things." He'd said too much already. How much longer would he be able to keep her? "Go to the stable. Get our horses ready. We ride out tonight."

"Duncan, there's no reason to ride out. We've a warm place to sleep tonight. A roof, for God's sake."

"We ride out tonight."

So, wrapped in cloaks and huddled in their saddles against a cold drizzle, they spent the night on the road.

Eleanor rode behind him, and her silence bothered him. He kept looking over his shoulder to make sure she was still there.

"What did he say to you?" he said.

"Who?"

"That boy."

"He told me I was pretty."

"What else?"

"What's the matter with you?"

"What else?"

She gave a long-suffering sigh, then let hoofbeats fill the silence before answering. "He asked me if I ever felt like I was betraying them. He could not believe that I would draw a creature of magic to me, then betray it."

"Well? Is that how you feel?"

"I don't know. I don't think I want to do this forever. I think I would like to marry someday."

"What do you know about marriage?"

"It's what men and women do, isn't it?"

He was so very, very close to losing her. Perhaps he should just let her go.

"Men like that don't marry girls like you, so you can stop thinking of it."

"I didn't say I'd like to marry *him*. Though—I've heard men pay more for virgins."

He might have said a hundred things to that, but he refused to be taunted.

A couple dozen strides of silence later, Eleanor said sullenly, "You may own me, Duncan, but you're not my father so don't pretend to be."

More hoofbeats, more silence, then Duncan said softly, "You earned your way free a long time ago, Eleanor." He didn't think she heard him.

Eleanor let her hair hang loose, draping in waves down her shoulders and back. She wore a blue gown the color of sky at twilight and went barefoot. As she matured, becoming more

comfortable in her own skin, she attracted older unicorns, ones not so easily enticed, the ones with the longest horns.

They might wait for weeks before drawing one close. During that time Eleanor would wander through the woods, walking, singing, making her presence known. Duncan followed, moving softly and staying hidden. Once, he'd had to stay downwind of a unicorn who followed Eleanor for five days before finally revealing itself and coming to her hand.

He never struck until the unicorn touched her, thus losing its will to flee.

This time it took three days to lure the beast. Eleanor walked into a clearing, knelt, and picked flowers, humming to herself. The unicorn emerged from the trees behind her. She paused—perhaps she felt its breath on her neck—but she didn't turn around. She kept humming, picking flowers until she had a small bouquet. Duncan crouched in the shelter of a thicket and waited.

The unicorn, a broad, muscular beast with a horn almost two feet long, stepped around her, sniffing her. She didn't move, she was in its power—with its horn leveled at her, it could stab her at any moment. So she waited until it stopped before her, then slowly offered it her flowers. It reached and brushed them with its lips.

A cry, like the whinny of a horse sounded through a trumpet, rang through the forest. On the opposite side of the clearing from Duncan, a white shape hurdled the underbrush and thundered toward Eleanor and the unicorn. It snorted with each stride.

This creature, this second unicorn, was at least 18 hands tall, a titan that shook the ground as it galloped. Its blazing horn must have been three feet long, the longest Duncan had ever seen.

Tossing its head, it raced at Eleanor's unicorn and rammed it flank-to-flank, shoving it away from her. The newcomer screamed again, rearing at its fellow, which cried in answer and spun out of the way, tearing the soil with black hooves. The monster drove it off, and it raced into the forest.

The monster's mane shook, white hair cascading over satin shoulders. As it turned to follow the other, it let fly a kick with all the power of those massive hindquarters.

Eleanor had backed away from the fight, but not out of range of those hooves. Struck, she flew back, lifted bodily and sent sprawling on the bracken.

"Eleanor!" Duncan burst from his hiding place just as the unicorn fled with the same rolls of thunder with which it had arrived.

She was curled on her side, coughing and gasping for breath. He left his longbow and sword behind and crouched by her, gingerly touching her arm and fearing how broken she might be.

"Eleanor, speak. Where are you hurt? Tell me." He touched her face, ran his hand to her neck, and felt a rapid pulse.

"I'm all right," she said, wheezing, brushing his hands away and trying to sit up. "Lost my breath is all."

His hand went to her side to help her up, and she cried out and flinched away. Her breathing started to come in panicked gasps.

"Sit back. Breathe slow. Good." He helped her lay back against a tree and prodded her side. The pain came mostly in her ribs. Cracked, he wagered. She wasn't coughing blood, she could feel all her limbs. She'd come away lucky.

He made camp there and fetched a bucket of water from a cold stream. He came to where she lay curled up, favoring her injury.

"Strip," he said. "I'll have to wrap those ribs."

"What?"

"Take off your dress."

She blushed, crossing her hands over her chest. Then, a half-smile dawning on her lips, she gave him a look that made *him* blush.

"Yes, sir," she said, helping him unlacing her gown.

He pointedly did not stare at her breasts as he bandaged her torso. When had she gotten breasts? They weren't much, just large enough to fill a man's hand, and yet—he was not staring.

"What was that thing?" she asked, gritting her teeth as he pulled the cloth tight. "It didn't even notice me."

"A legend among legends. An old brute of a unicorn. Filled with

rage and jaded to the scent of virgins."

"Like you," she said, sitting half-naked before him.

He tied off the bandage, giving it an extra tug that made her squeak.

"It's been watching us for some time," he said. "Perhaps—perhaps it is time I quit this game."

He helped her settle by the fire to rest, and he cooked their supper. They ate in silence. He put away the dishes, saw to their horses, and brought back his bedroll.

Eleanor watched him across the fire.

"We could catch it," she said.

"You don't just catch a beast like that. It is a god among unicorns, and we've inspired its wrath."

"You're afraid."

He grunted a denial and looked away. Not afraid—he'd spent more nights alone in wilderness most folk dared not travel in daylight than he had under roofs. He could buy any man, lord or commoner, that he chose. He made way for no one. He did not fear. But he was getting old, finding himself wishing for some of the roofs he had shunned. Perhaps that was nearly the same as fear.

Eleanor wouldn't understand, young imp that she was. Her eyes were bright, her face clean of wrinkles of age and worry. Her time in the wild had made her luminous.

"I think I can tempt an old brute of a unicorn."

"A beast like that sees nothing but its own fury."

She moved to his side of the fire, wincing and pressing her hand to the bandage as she crawled. She sat close to him; they had not been so close since he carried her before him on his saddle.

She touched his face. Not pressing, she held her palm lightly against his cheek, just enough to brush the edge of his beard. She was trembling a little, unsure of the gesture. Her brow furrowed, her expression anxious and waiting. Then, she kissed him.

Her lips felt as soft and clean as she looked. Her breath brushed his cheek, sending warmth across his face, through all his blood.

He dared not move, lest he frighten the creature away.

When he did not react, she ran her hand up his cheek, tangled her fingers in his hair, and kissed him more firmly. She was clumsy, her nose jutting into his, her balance on her knees wavered.

He took her face in both his hands and taught her how to kiss properly.

He almost gave in, and she almost let him, but his hand went from her breast to clutch her bandaged side and she gasped and flinched away. Giggling, she curled up in his arms, head resting on his chest.

"See? I can tempt an old brute."

He brushed his fingers through her fine hair, touching her as he went, ear, neck, shoulder.

"I never intended to make a whore of you," he said softly.

She pulled away and looked at him. "You've done it from the first, using me to make your money, haven't you?"

He chuckled sadly. She was right, after all. "You've become too worldly for this hunt."

"Not yet. We have one more unicorn to catch."

It would be best to leave it. But even if he never entered another forest for the rest of his days, that old beast would haunt him. That prize, that challenge, the three-foot horn—that was how he should end his hunting days. And the time was now: Eleanor had reached the peak of her maidenhood, unsurpassed beauty, her innocence still intact but ready to burst, a rose at the height of her bloom. Perhaps the old beast wouldn't be able to resist her. After all, five years of nothing but pure thoughts notwithstanding, only a cracked rib made him resist.

"Why do you want to do this?" he asked.

"The usual reasons: money, fame. Because it is the profession to which I was apprenticed and I have no choice."

"Then I set you free. Here and now, I have no hold over you, and moreover I will give you half of what we have earned these past years. I will not ask you to act as bait for the old one. So, will you leave?"

"No. I will hunt the old one."

"Why?"

She hesitated before answering, pursing her lips and looking around at trees and sky. "The power," she said finally. "The power I have over them. A girl like me—there's no other power I could have, is there?"

Heart pounding, he thought, *There is another power you have.*

They waited for Eleanor's ribs to heal before searching out the old one. They left their horses behind, took a minimum of gear, and traveled deeper into the northern woods than they ever had before.

Tracking unicorns, it was no good looking for hoof prints or broken twigs for signs of their passing. They left no prints. One searched for other evidence: a pool of water that should have been brackish, but was clear and fresh; a patch of grass greener than the foliage around it, where one of them had slept. Then, catching unicorns was more like fishing than hunting. Once a place they frequented was found, there was nothing to do but set the bait and wait.

They caught a glimpse of it after they had been looking for a week. Eleanor—watched by Duncan, who perched in a tree a hundred paces away—sat alone in a sunny clearing, brushing her hair. The beast, a fierce buck as large and thick as an oak tree, moved toward her, silently for all its bulk. Its thick mane and tail rippled, its coat shone like silver.

Duncan watched it pass to the edge of the clearing, but it did not enter. It circled, watching Eleanor. She looked up only when she heard its breath snort. When she did, it turned and galloped away.

Eleanor didn't eat much at supper that evening. "I think I'm afraid of it," she said, not meeting Duncan's gaze. "It sees into my heart, sees I'm proud. I can't fool it."

"Do you want to leave off?"

"No. Fear will pass."

The next day, clouds covered the sky. The day after, a drizzle set in, a long, cold rain promising to last for days. They wrapped their cloaks tight around them and found sheltered hillocks in which to spend the nights. Eleanor said she caught glimpses of the old one twice, watching them through trees from far away.

"Who's hunting who, I wonder?" Duncan said, frowning.

A week later, at twilight, when the rain-damp sky was a breath away from falling to darkness, Eleanor stopped Duncan with a hand on his chest.

"Let me go on ahead," she said. "Circle 'round to that thicket, watch from there."

"You think he's there?"

"I think he's waiting for me."

He grabbed her hand and kissed her fingers before striking off.

A clearing lay where she had pointed him. He saw nothing, but crouched hidden, bow strung and arrow ready, and waited.

A moment later, Eleanor approached. She had left behind her pack, cloak, and boots, and unbound her hair. Her linen dress was quickly becoming soaked, clinging to her until every part of her slim frame showed: the line of her waist, slope of hip, the matched curves of her breasts. Her hair, darker when wet, dripped down her shoulders and back, framing her face, slick with rain.

Wandering into the glade, she seemed like a creature of mist, a nymph from a tale, one of the watery maids who pulled men under lakes to their deaths. Being soaking wet did not detract from her grace; she stepped lightly, lifting her skirt away from her feet, and stood tall. She looked up at the sky and smiled.

A snorting breath, loud as a roar, preceded the old unicorn's charge into the clearing. He ran at her, legs pumping, head lowered so its horn aimed for her heart. Duncan almost let fly his arrow, knowing he could never hit it as it ran but fearing for Eleanor.

She stood her ground. She didn't move. Just smiled a little and waited.

A mere stride away from her, the unicorn slid to an abrupt stop, hind end gathered underneath it, front legs lifted, and shook its head, brandishing the horn.

Eleanor crouched, lowering herself on bent knees, and raised her arm to the beast, offering her hand. She showed herself submissive, the lesser of the two.

The unicorn shook his head, his obsidian eyes flashing. He seemed torn, straining forward even as he resisted, as if pressing against a barrier. The beast stepped back, pranced in place, then spun away. He did not flee, but trotted a circle around her. She circled with him, her hand outstretched, fingers splayed, waiting for a chance when he might brush against them. While he came close—drifting in tighter and tighter circles, then suddenly leaping out to the edge of the clearing again, like a child playing around a bonfire—he never let her touch him.

All the while, Eleanor smiled a soft, wondering smile.

It was a game, this teasing and dodging. They must have played it for an hour. Sometimes the unicorn stopped and seemed ready to step toward her, head bowed, tamed. Then he reared and jumped away, and Eleanor laughed. At this, his ears pricked forward, his neck arched, and he seemed pleased to hear her.

Duncan watched from the thicket, his cold hands gripping his bow and notched arrow, his face flushed.

The unicorn moved toward her, hot breaths coming in clouds of mist. His back stood a good deal taller than Eleanor; his head towered above her. He came close enough for his breath to wash over her lifted face, but he still would not cross the last stride to her arms.

So she played the tease, and backed away from him.

"I'm pure as starlight, dear one. Touch me."

She pulled at the laces closing the neck of her gown. She separated the front edges, enough to show breast but not nipple. She stretched her arms back, so that at any moment the gown might fall off her shoulders completely, but it didn't, and she shook back her hair. The unicorn stretched his neck toward her, but she stayed just out of reach.

Duncan bit his lip. He dared not shift, though he was hard, pressed painfully against his breeches. Blood pounded through his crotch. He willed his hands to remain steady.

Her feet and legs were caked with mud, the hem of her gown black with the stuff, even though she held it off the ground. She was wet as a drowned kitten, but smiling and shining, moving a slow dance like she was born to this damp world—as innocent as the rain. Rain that gave life, and flooded and drowned. This, he thought, was why men paid more for virgins.

The old unicorn was also aroused.

She had him then. She got to her knees, as she had done instinctively that first time, and offered him her cupped hands. With deliberate steps he came to her, lowered his head until his whiskers brushed her fingers, and licked her palms with a thick, pink tongue.

Duncan loosed his arrow.

Pierced through the throat, the unicorn screamed. He reared, becoming a tower of a beast, as tall as some of the trees. Duncan jumped from his blind and shot again and again. One arrow hit the unicorn's chest, another his shoulder, but still the beast kept to his feet. Duncan thought the monster would turn and run, and he would have to track him until he dropped. But the unicorn stayed, kicking and rearing, flipping over and over again the ground where Eleanor had been.

She'd ducked away, crouching at the edge of the clearing; Duncan saw enough to know she was safe. He got one more shot away before the unicorn charged him. He drew his sword and managed a slice at him as he passed. The edge nicked his chest, drawing a lit-

tle blood, but the unicorn didn't slow. He turned on his haunches, throwing a rain of mud behind him, and attacked. Neck arched, horn aimed, the unicorn ran at him. Duncan stumbled back and raised his sword to block.

He couldn't hold his own against the sheer force of the beast's movement. The unicorn pressed forward, his body a battering ram with his horn at the fore, and Duncan could only rush to escape, making token parries with his sword.

The unicorn got beside him and with a swipe of his head knocked Duncan over. He sprawled in the mud, and as he got to his knees the unicorn charged again, striking him as he turned away. The blow wrenched his shoulder and spun him around. Setting his will, he got

to his feet and looked for the next attack—the unicorn was coming at him again, making a running start, ready to impale him on that prized, impossible horn.

He opened his hands—his sword was gone. He'd lost his bow as well.

He waited until the last moment to dodge, to keep the unicorn from swerving to stab him anyway, and again the beast's bulk shoved him over. With the wind knocked out of him, he was slower to rise this time. He heard the thunder of hot breaths coming closer.

Eleanor screamed. "Here I am! It's me you want!" She stood in the middle of the clearing, arms at her sides.

The unicorn stopped in a stride and turned to Eleanor, his betrayer. With a satisfied snort, he trotted at her, neck arched, horn ready.

"Eleanor, no," Duncan would have said, if he'd had the breath for it.

She got to her knees—putting herself too low for the beast to stab her comfortably.

He'd have had to bring his nose nearly to his chest. So he had to crush her with his hooves.

Duncan stumbled in the mud, hoping to get to her in time.

The unicorn reared, preparing to bring all his weight and anger down on Eleanor.

In a heartbeat, she stepped underneath him and raised Duncan's sword, which she'd hidden beside her.

She held it in place underneath his heart, and he came down on the point. For a split second he hung there, and it looked like she was holding him up with the sword. Blood rained down on her from the wound. Then he fell straight onto her, and they crumpled together.

Finally, too late, Duncan found his feet. The unicorn was dead. Its body lay on its side, a mound in the center of the clearing.

"Eleanor," he panted with each breath. He approached its back, his heart pounding in his throat. Blood streamed from the body, filling in puddles and footprints. He saw no movement, heard no cries.

He went around the great unicorn's head, twisted up from its neck, its horn half-buried in mud.

And there was Eleanor, streaked with blood and dirt, extricating herself from the unicorn's bent legs.

"Eleanor!" He slid into the mud beside her and touched her hair, her shoulders, her arms. He helped her wipe the grime from her face. "Are you hurt? Are you well?"

"I got away. I'm only a little bruised. But you—" She did the same, pawing him all over for signs of injury. His twisted shoulder hurt to move, but he could move it. All his limbs worked. He could draw breath. He would live. They both sighed.

Smiling, she took his hands.

"No more unicorns, Duncan. If you want me, I'm yours. And if you won't have me, I'll leave and find someone who will."

He swallowed her with kisses until she laughed. Then he took her, there in the rain and the mud, against the carcass of the unicorn.

The
unicorn moved
toward her, hot
breaths coming in
clouds of mist. He
came close enough for
his breath to wash
over her lifted
face.

RETURN STORES

Magic isn't always found in wooded glades and stone circles. Sometimes it's found in wooden beams and stone girders.

BY KAREN TRAVISS • ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN BERKEY

Today, I'm just a madman blowing a dented brass bugle while the street where my grandfather lived is razed to the ground.

It's amazing how fast they can knock down a terrace of houses. First the crane swings the ball at the end house. You see the walls peel away, and the floors collapse, leaving the party wall. It's like a sheet from a cardboard doll's house, the sort you fold and slot together: there's pink emulsion paint marking where the bathroom was, and blue Georgian striped wallpaper in the bedroom, but no walls separating them, just a torn line where the stud partitions were. Maybe you can slot it all back together again somehow.





I give the bugle another strangled blast. It's much harder than you'd think to get a brass instrument to make a noise. The demolition team glances at me from time to time, but they probably can't hear it.

The sound isn't for them, anyway. It's for the house, the last one left in the row.

Ten years ago, when my grandfather died, he left me his home.

When I opened the cupboard, the smell of a lifetime ago hit me; oily, musty, and faintly bitter at the back of my throat. I reached out to touch the workman's coat that I knew had to be hanging there. I knew it would feel slightly damp under my fingers, and that it would carry the dark patina of graphite grease.

I clutched at air. The cupboard was empty, except for the heritage of its dockyard smell.

"Your grandfather didn't do much to this house, Mr. Hollis," said the solicitor. He kept looking at his watch: he obviously had better-paying clients than students like me to attend to. "But property prices round here are going up, and you can probably get an improvement grant from the council. So, all in all, not a bad inheritance."

A shabby two-up, two-down flat-fronted terraced house with an outside toilet and no central heating. It was a scene from one of those time-warp programs where they made people live in the 1940s for a month without fridges and unlimited hot water. But to a student like me it was a potential palace, somewhere I could be independent and have parties without worrying about rent, or my mother complaining about the spilled beer and the noise.

Granddad's furniture was still there, wartime utility style, polished

work was speckled with tiny weld burns. At Christmas dinner when I was six, I remembered him crying and making Mum embarrassed when he rambled on about the injustice of being sacked and how they had stabbed him in the back. I thought he had to be brave, because he was just like the heroes in films who got stabbed but went on fighting. And I decided there and then that bosses had to be very bad people to stab my Granddad and that I'd never, ever work for one.

Up in the attic, I found half-used cans of paint, more newspapers than I had ever seen in my life, and a ball of string made up of different lengths and colors knotted neatly together. I remembered lots of balls like that. But there was also a boxed dinner service and an old blue suitcase.

Granddad tended to hoard things, my Mum said, but they were useful things. Paper—well, you could do a lot with old newspaper. And string. "You'll be glad of that one day," he'd say, and knot another rescued length on to the last. It was typical of people who'd lived through the war and rationing, Mum said. They never got out of the habit of saving what they could.

The blue suitcase was the last thing I opened, after I had heaved all the other stuff I couldn't find a use for into someone else's rubbish skip farther along the road. It was a long job, waiting until it got dark and then taking the stuff out a bag at a time. I didn't know then how you went about hiring a skip, and I didn't think it was wrong to use something that someone else had paid for. I still can't remember exactly when my attitude to what was right and proper changed, but it did.

I put the suitcase on the kitchen table and stared at it for a while, almost embarrassed to open it. It was Granddad's. It was personal. But I did. The rusty catches snapped open, and when I lifted the lid I inhaled old newspaper, leather, and mildew. There were documents in a tattered manila envelope that was succed from frequent handling, cracked photographs in varying tones of brown and

gray, a couple of tally bands from sailors' caps, and the old bugle he'd shown me that one Christmas.

The documents were insurance policies and receipts long out of date. I spent more time looking at the photographs. Warships with men standing in front of them, self-conscious men, some of them with those thin little hand-rolled cigarettes Granddad called "ticklers." It was a matter of pride to be able to roll them with just one hand, he said.

I remembered that quite suddenly. He was a dockyardman—pronounced locally as *docky-ardman*. Docky-ardmen called their tea kitty a *tea boat* and had a language all their own. These pictures showed docky-ardmen paused at work, welders, riggers, shipwrights, all trades a man could be proud of. Pencil on the backs of the prints were notes—not in Granddad's hand—like *Repairing Calson No. 4* and *Illustrious, North Corner*. And there were pictures of a tide of men on bicycles streaming out of the dockyard gates, hundreds of them, so many that nobody on bike, on foot, or even in a car could have made headway against that flow.

It had once been the biggest industrial complex in Europe. Maybe that was one of the reasons Granddad had loved it so much: it was

It was a scene from one of those time-warp programs where they made people live in the 1940s for a month without fridges and unlimited hot water.

so many times the varnish was worn through on the edges. A time-speckled mirror with green faceted glass edges still hung above the tiny gas fire, and there were a couple of amateur paintings of warships hanging on the wall. Granddad had been a welder in the dockyard and the Navy had been his life right up to the time he lost his job.

Mum said he was sacked for pilfering and that he'd never got over the shame of it. I knew that: when he'd had a glass of beer or whisky at Christmas, he'd go quiet and miserable and then talk about the dockyard and how he would clear his name. That seemed terribly important, because his name was also my name, Arthur, although I never told kids at school what the A after Mark was for. My mother would say: "Come on, Dad, it's all history now." But it wasn't over for him, not at all. Once, just once, he took me up a ladder to the attic where he showed me a battered brass bugle that he said would prove he was innocent. When I asked Mum about it she said that grown-ups often said stupid things when they'd had a drink.

But today I was that kid again, hiding in the coats and waiting for Granddad to find me. His shirt, his coat, everything he wore at

a nation in its own right with a clear sense of what it was there for, and every man a citizen. I picked up one of the pictures that seemed more recent. It was a retirement presentation, but not Granddad's of course, although he was in the picture. The men with him were all posed around another man holding a framed certificate. When I turned it over, the names were written on the back, and this time the notes were Granddad's handwriting.

L-R—Nobby Clark, Dusty Miller, Tugg Wilson. All those daft nicknames: I never understood why they needed to rename people, but the civilians did it just as the Navy did, perhaps aping their uniformed masters. Or perhaps it was the industrial version of a tribal initiation, where you were cleansed of your mundane name to reinforce your passage into another world, the world of steel ships. Did they take Granddad's name from him to show he had been fired, like breaking a disgraced officer's sword? It made me inexplicably sad. I knew I would never need to write my friends' names on the backs of their photographs. I'd remember them perfectly.

There were no pictures of the family or Grandma in the case. In fact, I never found any in the house at all.

I picked up the bugle and peered down into its depths, then held it to my lips and tried half-heartedly to blow a note. I was afraid I'd wake up the whole terrace. But I couldn't get a sound from it. I tried a little harder, and harder still, and even when I started to feel giddy from blowing the thing I still couldn't get more than a strangled raspberry from it. I put it on the draining board, and wrote *brass polish* on the shopping list I'd stuck on the side of one of the cabinets. I'd clean the bugle up.

Sometime, too, I thought, I'd see if Nobby or Tugg or Dusty or any of the others in that retirement picture were still around. I felt I needed to talk to people who knew a Granddad that the family didn't.

I imagined I would have a job to trace people from so long ago. I was wrong. The librarian tapped at her keyboard, sending lists scrolling down her screen and then printed me out details of places I could start. There were ex-dockyard associations, the dockyard historical society, and even a "where are they now" column in the local paper.

"You know, you could even just ask 'round the area," she said. "This might look like a city but it's really a big village. People don't move far from here. Some people have never even been off the island. We stay, and it's just the itinerant population that comes and goes."

"Navy and students?" I said.

"Mainly students now."

She meant me, I realized, and it was the first time it had struck me that I didn't sound local. I'd had a middle-class education and I didn't say "wont" and "int" any longer. But the idea of never leaving the city—the island—seemed amazing to my generation. I wanted out. I was going to qualify as a civil engineer and I was going to work for myself, not for bosses or foremen like Granddad did. I had all these financial rationalizations about the benefits of self-employment, but being back in his house reminded me of my real motivation. Bosses stabbed you. Bosses could take away your job, your whole identity, even your sanity, and no bugger was going to do to me what they had done to Granddad.

I polished the bugle with oily wads of DuraGlit. It took some time to bring up the luster, and I was inexplicably pleased with myself when I did. Then I held it to my lips. The taste was awful. I should have washed the mouthpiece off first, so as an afterthought I ran it under the tap and dried it on the tea towel, cherishing a moment of rebellion because Mum said tea towels were only for plates and cutlery. But this was my house: I could be a slob here if I pleased.

Nobody was there to see me. I felt I was blushing anyway. *Stupid*

thing to do ... I gave the bugle a cautious puff, then a more determined blow with my lips hard together.

The note startled me. It was pure and unwavering, not an agonized *tharpp*, and it made my ears ring. The mirror over the fire shimmered slightly.

Granddad, muttering about his disgrace, and Mum crying in the kitchen after Dad shouted at her and said it was time the silly old sod shut up about it. Granddad worked as a brewery drayman for years after he left the yard, Mum said; he made lots of friends and did well, but I never remembered any of that. He never got over the yard. So neither would I. I gave the bugle a few more blasts and surprised myself by managing to hold a long, pure note for what seemed like eternity.

This time the two spent six-inch brass shell cases standing on the mantelpiece rattled slightly on their bases. I decided to put the bugle away for a while. In the evenings after lectures, I started looking for the dockyard associations. In a couple of weeks I was being entertained modestly in back-room bars by old boys who talked the foreign language of my Granddad, the language of *tiffs* and *hiddly jobs* and *parting brass rags*. Inside a month, I'd found some of Granddad's old mates. There I go again. I almost called them *colleagues*.

Nobby and Dusty drank pints of bitter top, one of those old men's tastes I hadn't acquired, a glass slightly short of a pint of bitter with a shot of barley wine added for impact. I was still a lager man in those days. It was long before I affected a taste for Pinot Noir and Waitrose Good Ordinary Claret. The bar was small and the walls were covered with that Victorian-style textured paper you could paint over a hundred times and still see the embossed design. Its latest incarnation was chocolate brown gloss, possibly because there was so much smoke in the bar that any other color would have surrendered to brown anyway.

"We never lost touch with Janner," Dusty said. It was the first time I had heard his nickname: his real name was Arthur. "I mean, it was a terrible thing in them days, to be sacked for thieving, but he was straight as a die and we never believed it." He took his haccy tin from his jacket and began assembling a cigarette, rolling it with one hand; and yes, it was a skill to behold. "It did get to him, though. There was the bugle thing."

Nobby nodded, and coughed impressively. "Yeah, 'Return Stores.' We thought he was off his rocker then, but it was harmless enough."

Bugle? Bugles weren't something that cropped up that often, not in the life I was leading, and I had one and here we were talking about it. "What about the bugle?" I said.

"Daf! dockyard legend." Nobby hacked noisily again, and Dusty's tickler was already ashes. "Return Stores." It was supposed to be a bugle call, from when prisoners worked in the yard and the Army—not the Navy, son, this was an Army garrison as well as a port—the Army watched over them, and at the end of the day the bugler would play 'Return Stores' to let them know it was time to take their tools and doings back to the stores. So on Judgment Day, 'Return Stores' would be sounded, and all the stuff that had been nicked over the years from the dockyard and found its way into people's homes would rise up and march back to the yard. And 'cos so much had been nicked over the centuries, the whole city would collapse when the stuff marched off."

"Rabbit." I said. It was one of the words I remembered Granddad using: rabbit. It was yard slang for materials stolen from the yard, or anything made out of them. As a boy I really thought dockyardmen took home real rabbits under their diesel-scented coats.

"That's it, son. Rabbit." Nobby laughed and it started him coughing again. "And they really *was* real rabbits, once, when the yard covered part of the Common."

My skin prickled. I dismissed a thought that he might have read

my memories. I suppose all kids thought rabbits were real: and I once thought Granddad really had been stabbed in the back. "I found a bugle in his attic," I said.

"Daft sod was convinced he'd blow it some day, just to prove his house didn't fall down and so it wasn't full of stuff he'd nicked." He pronounced the contractions as "dint" and "wont." "I ask yer."

"So what does 'Return Stores' sound like?"

"Haven't a clue, son. Nobody seems to. You could ask the Army. It's just a legend, anyway."

"So why did Granddad keep the bugle, then?" He hadn't been

out and thought about Granddad. I was old enough to appreciate that a job was who you were, and that losing it unfairly really hurt. Then I forgot about them again. I forgot because I had another contract with a big civil engineering company and a life and I felt secure enough at work to think about getting married.

I forgot about the bugle, right up to the time the doctor told Mum she had stomach cancer.

Visiting her in hospital meant a long drive down south. Up to then, I had thought I had time to come to terms with it. But it was a late diagnosis. She was shrunken in that big awkward hospital

bed, a scrap of someone I used to know, silenced by drugs and full of tubes. She looked like a stranger. If I'd thought living a long way from home was a way of blunting the impact of family death, I was wrong.

I managed to fit in four visits before she died. One Saturday evening, while I was sitting beside her bed and watching the occasional nurse wander in and out of the ward, she stirred.

"I was thinking about Dad," she said, her voice distorted by the cancer and the nasogastric tube.

Still the self-centered kid, I thought she meant my father,

who'd left four years ago. I started thinking of ways to find the bastard and get him here, if that was what she wanted. Then I realized she meant her own father, Granddad.

"Were you, Mum?"

"He was so upset."

"About what?"

"Being sacked. The kids in my class didn't let me forget it. Thief. Thief."

"It's OK, Mum," I said. "Nobody believed it anyway. Don't you worry about that now."

"He wanted to prove it," she said. "That trumpet thing."

They were near enough the last words she ever spoke. Call me stupid, but it's amazing how imperative dying words can be compared to every plea and order and demand from the living. I owed it one last try.

The naval base authorities (it was no longer a dockyard by then, stripped of its rank in the defense cuts) were less than helpful. They couldn't go into an industrial case so many years in the past, they said, and anyway they probably couldn't find the records, and they were *very sorry*. The official I spoke to on the phone had the tone of voice of a man revealing nothing for fear of legal action rather than one wary of divulging state secrets, almost deferential. I had developed an effective middle-class tone of outraged insistence that wore down bosses and would have made Granddad proud.

But they still couldn't help. I spent months harrying them, and months in the central library going back through newspapers and microfiche, but it yielded nothing. I had done all I could. At least I thought I had, right up until the autumn that year when I got a letter from Nobby.

His handwriting was careful and remarkably ornate for a plain man, all extravagant wobbly loops. They were demolishing the houses, he said. Did I want to come down south and see Jan-ner's house—Granddad's house—one last time before they

If it works, if I blow the bugle and the house doesn't fall down, I think Granddad would want one of his mates to see the proof."

remotely musical, and he only kept *useful* things. "I know he was traumatized by the sacking, but surely not enough to develop an obsession."

Nobby looked at me as if I had spoken Latin to him. "He went a bit funny in the head after he had to leave the yard. Never the same."

Kids don't notice the broad sweep of misery, just the detail. I knew Grandma got angry with him when we visited, and Mum said the sacking had "put a lot of strain" on everyone. But nobody died, and life carried on as normal in my self-centered kid's eyes, even if Granddad did cry when he wasn't supposed to.

I had a question about the bugle. "Where did he get it? Do you know?" If I imagined there would be a romantic explanation, I was wrong.

"Rabbit," said Nobby, and they all laughed. "Nicked it off some Booty when there was this drinking session. Now that *was* bloody daft, pilfering from a Marine."

My blameless Granddad, a thief after all. Part of me felt shudderingly sick, the part raised on Granddad the poor but honest working man, victim of management. The other part felt a sense of relief that I might not have family honor to satisfy.

But I liked Nobby. I wished Granddad were still here so I could buy him a pint of bitter top, too, and talk to him and understand him. All I had, though, was Nobby, and I sent him a Christmas card via the association every year after that.

As for "Return Stores," I never did find anyone—Army, Navy or Marine—who knew what the bugle call should sound like.

Four years later, after I had left university and no longer needed Granddad's house, I sold it. There was nothing of him left there, and I wanted it far behind the current *me* that was now making a living as a construction engineer. I was self-employed, free of stabbing bosses. Even if I faced gaps between contracts, they still couldn't take my profession from me, nor the rabbit bugle, nor the photographs.

I took them with me too, with my identity. I put them in a box and forgot them twice for eight years. When I moved house—twice, once when I lost my contract—I rediscovered them and took them

knocked it down?

Of course I did.

I arrived with the photographs, now filed neatly in an album, and the bugle. Nobby still had a hacking cough, but the ticklers hadn't claimed him yet.

"What you doin' now, son?" he asked. "Still building them roads and towers?"

"I'm a consulting engineer now, in a partnership."

"Good to have a trade that's up in yer head like that, not like a job with yer hands." We drank in that same pub, and the walls were still brown gloss embossed. It might have been a new coat of brown, but I couldn't tell. "They've started knocking them down already, y'know. Half of Kassassin Street's gone."

"I brought Granddad's pictures. Like to have a look?"

Nobby was entranced. He could name most of the men in the photographs and provided instant histories of them and the work they were pictured doing. I should have been comforted by the reminiscence, but it only served to remind me that Granddad had a life I could now only know through the recollections of his old mates.

"See you brought the bugle," he said.

I fumbled with the carrier bag. It didn't disguise the shape very well. "I wondered if you might like it as a keepsake," I lied.

Nobby laughed. "I don't have that much time to keep now," he said. "Or you could give it to the museum. Don't expect they'd worry how your Granddad got it."

"I suppose that's the irony. He did steal something."

"Janner wasn't the only bloke lifted for nicking stuff, son." His smoke-stained fingertips were like tan leather, as if he were gloved. He shook slightly while he rolled a tickler and had to steady it with a touch from his other hand. "It was an industry. Your old Granddad might have been the only one not at it, 'cept for the bugle of course. There was even a bloke who put Epsom salts in his sugar tin to stop his mates nicking it, only he forgot and had some himself." Nobby roared with laughter again. "Serves the tight sod right."

He was having trouble getting the lid back on his baccy tin and I reached out to do it for him. It surprised me that he let me. "Did you steal stuff?"

"A spanner or two. I knew a bloke who did his kitchen out all in crabfat gray, you know, warship paint, just 'cos he could. One even had that real gold paint off the royal yacht." He paused for a long swallow of bitter top, and I thought he might be finished. But he went on. "It was an art, getting stuff past the coppers on the gate, under your coat, whatever. They stopped you and searched you in the hut. Best I ever heard was the bike job, though. They never caught him."

"Go on."

"Bloke they thought was thieving. Every night at knocking off time, they'd stop him at the gate and he'd get off his pushbike and they'd turn him over. Nothing. Never found buggler all. Years later we heard he'd been nicking the bikes and riding 'em out the yard."

"Is that an apocryphal tale?" I asked.

"What's that, then?"

"Like 'Return Stores.' A yarn."

"Might be."

Nobby enjoyed the rest of his pint and then a couple more. I wished I'd heard these tales from Granddad. Now I was soaking up yarns from the last of a generation of men who would take their fables with them to the grave, because well-educated people like me hadn't seen them for the history they truly were. It was my history.

"Everything's got to have an end to it," he said. His tone was different now, almost gentle, as if he were afraid he'd hurt a child's feelings.

"You should get it out of your system, now that the house is going."

"How?" I knew how. I'd just lost my nerve. "Any ideas?"

He nudged the carrier bag with his boot. "Blow that bloody thing and get it over with."

Perhaps he had a more sophisticated grasp of psychology than I imagined a working man was capable of. He was telling me I needed closure. If I did what Granddad had believed might prove he hadn't been a thief, the mind-magic might work.

I couldn't argue with that. It was better than living with that nagging at the back of my mind. I'd do it for Mum, but most of all I'd do it for myself and for Granddad.

"Would you come with me?" I asked. "If it works, if I blow the bugle and the house doesn't fall down, I think Granddad would want one of his mates to see the proof." And we laughed as if it were a bad joke, but we *knew* it was irrational and why we were really doing it. We both had to put it to rest. Well, I did. Nobby was just being supportive like a real Granddad.

The contractor demolishing the terrace was as helpful as a street artist inviting people to watch him paint. They would probably get round to the houses the day after tomorrow, and it was *no problem at all* for me to watch as long as I observed safety regulations, and seeing I was an *engineer* I would know all about those things.

Granddad's house stood in two facing terraces of boarded-up properties preparing to make way for a new development of one-bedroom apartments. The city had always been packed tight, trying to sprawl in its corset of an island. Nobby and I stood on the corner of the street for a long time and watched the diggers and cranes coming to life.

I always carried hard hats in my car, the smart green and white ones bearing the name Butcher Gascoine and Hollis. *See, Granddad, I made it: a partner. No bosses for me.* Nobby and I put them on and moved closer to the demolition.

I still had the bugle in the Waitrose carrier bag, as befitted the upwardly mobile, and it embarrassed me to take it out. Then, suddenly, it didn't. I held it to my lips.

I paused and looked at Nobby. "I still haven't a clue what 'Return Stores' should sound like," I said.

"Nobody does, son," he said, squinting through spiralling wisps of cigarette smoke. "Just do what comes into your head."

I put the bugle to my lips. Fall, Jericho; fall, houses built from rabbit; fall, all those kitchens painted crabfat gray. It was time to march home to the yard.

Nobby nudges me, and points to a short section of pipe rolling slowly down the slight incline of the pavement. It comes to a halt. "I know where that's going," he says, and roars with laughter.

But Granddad's house is still standing. They're having another go at it. One of the demolition crew is cursing about "***** metal RSJs" but I know it's not the rolled steel joists standing against the onslaught.

It's the *boise*. It's telling everyone it was built and furnished fair and square, with nothing stolen or fished or sneaked through the dockyard gates. For a few private minutes, it vindicates my grandfather. Nobby has seen the house stand alone, and so have I.

And I know those houses were never built with rolled steel joists.

Nobby waves goodbye. I slip the bugle into the carrier bag and start walking toward the sea front. I'm taking it to the museum, where they won't mind that it's *rabbit*. Perhaps they can knock the dents out of the bugle and keep a shine on it. Perhaps, one day, they'll even find someone who knows how to play 'Return Stores.' ♣

HERE AFTER LIFE

**When you're on your deathbed,
will you get a second chance?
Or a third, a fourth, a fifth? If you do, will you take it?**

It took the four of them half the day to convince Jim he was them, they were him, and they were all dead. It finally hit home when the 24-year-old guy in cutoffs and no shirt shoved the baby in Jim's hands and said, "You can fucking argue all you want, but I am not looking after this kid anymore."

Jim blinked at the cold familiarity of those words. God, he had been a dick at that age. Luckily, the baby wasn't very heavy, and Jim managed not to drop him. "What am I supposed to do with him?"

"You're the oldest now—you figure it out." Twenty-four-year-old patted the pockets of his cutoffs and fished out a lighter and a crushed pack of cigarettes.

"Hey, I quit," Jim said, nodding toward the cigarette.

Twenty-four-year-old flicked, puffed, and took a long, deep breath. "When you were 30." The cigarette bobbed between his lips as he spoke. "Too bad for you."

Jim could have strangled him then, if he wasn't, if they weren't, well, if things were different.

Jim looked over at the 13-year-old boy who paced at their maximum distance from each other—about four feet. He was mohawked and studded, chains connecting distant body parts. One look brought back the pain, the itch—worse—the snags and embarrassing rips.

Six-year-old Jimmy stood next to Jim and stared at him with a thoughtful expression.

"So this is me—I mean us?" Jim asked Twenty-four-year-old. Talking made his head hurt. They'd said something about a car, but Jim couldn't remember anything before the last few hours when he'd opened his eyes and realized he was sitting out here on the grass median in front of the hospital, surrounded by the four of them.

"That's right," Twenty-four-year-old said around the cigarette. "You catch on quick for an old guy." He walked a short distance away and sat on the fake boulder in front of the Mercy General sign.

The baby in Jim's hands squirmed. Jim looked down at him. Man, he was an ugly kid. Yellow skin, yellow eyes, and a head shaped like a number-two potato. Jaundice—that's what it was called, a failing of the liver that's usually taken care of with sunlamps and fluids. Had he had a serious case of it when he was born? Jim tried to remember if his mom had ever mentioned it. His thoughts hit a slick wall, and he gave up trying.

BY DEVON MONK • ILLUSTRATION BY PATRICK ARRASMITH



Baby made a sour face. He looked like he was going to cry or puke, but instead stared, glassy-eyed, over Jim's shoulder. He seemed awfully calm. Maybe being dead did that to a kid.

"You OK?" Jim giggled him, but the baby just stared.

"Of course he's not OK, he's dead," Thirteen-year-old said.

Jim managed to tuck the baby up against one shoulder. "Hey, Kid. Since you know so much, how about giving me a hand with the baby?"

Thirteen-year-old stopped pacing. His shoulders hunched in the loose, black T-shirt, then he slowly turned, all attitude and hypo-allergenic steel. Black streaks ran down his cheeks from the innermost corner of his eyes, and Jim tried to remember why he'd done the Alice Cooper look. "The name's Fly," he said.

Jim laughed. He'd forgotten about that.

Fly flipped him off and went back to pacing.

Which left six-year-old Jimmy.

"He's OK," Jimmy said. "I watched Baby before Fly came, and he watched him until he," he nodded toward Twenty-four-year-old, "got here. It's not hard. You just have to carry him. He doesn't eat or mess his diapers, you know."

Jim didn't know, but it made sense, if any of this did. "So you're the smart guy, huh? Do you have any idea why we're here, all of us—I mean me—broken apart like this, or what we're waiting around for?"

Jimmy's brown eyes lost their shine, and his mouth turned down. Six. The year Dad had flown to London and stayed there. The year he'd caught pneumonia so bad he passed out when he tried to stand. His first ambulance ride, his first breathing tube. Six came rushing back to Jim in a way he hadn't wanted to feel, taste, or remember in years.

"We're not dead enough. Part of us is still alive in there," Jimmy pointed toward the hospital, and the room Jim vaguely remembered. Surgery? Had his heart cashed in on its cholesterol count? No, an accident. Car. Head on. Fifty miles an hour around the curve from the airport bar. Driving hard. Driving away from Lucy.

"Jeezus," Jim said.

"It's pretty boring most of the time," Jimmy said. "I kinda hoped we'd die in the car wreck, but we got you instead."

"Thanks," Jim drawled.

Fly scoffed.

Jimmy tipped his head to the side. "Sorry," he said. "It hurt a lot, didn't it?"

a couple of blocks of our real body—the living us—him." He nodded toward the hospital and took a drag off the cigarette. "My guess is we're stuck this way until the living us—him—dies for good."

"So why aren't we in there?" Jim asked.

"I hate hospitals," Twenty-four-year-old said. He gave Jim a look that said you should know, you should remember.

"I don't care," Jim said. "I'm not just going to wait out here until I—we—die. I want to go in. I want to see me—us—him with my own eyes."

"Weren't you listening? We can't go anywhere unless we go together, and I'm not going in there."

Jim opened his mouth to tell him exactly where he could stick his attitude when Jimmy spoke up.

"Something's wrong with Baby."

"What?" Jim shifted the baby down from his shoulder and held him out along his hand and arm again.

Baby was still yellow, but his eyes were shut, and he seemed even more still than he had been. Jim shook him gently.

"Hey, guy. Wake up."

Baby giggled, but his eyes stayed shut, his chest still. Jim felt a chill wash over his skin. Baby wasn't breathing.

"Oh man," Fly said, his voice crackling.

"Jeezus," Twenty-four-year-old exhaled.

"Is he ... are we ...?" Fly said.

Jim took a breath, held it a minute, trying hard to feel Baby's heartbeat, and not sure that he'd had one before.

Baby began to fade, the edges first, wisping away like fog before a wind, fingers, arms, feet, and legs.

"This hasn't happened before," Twenty-four-year-old told Jim, eye to eye, man to man. He tried to look like he could handle it, but he was scared out of his skin and Jim knew it.

"What are we going to do? What's happening to us?" Fly had worked himself up into a scream, and his eyes were suddenly as young as Jimmy's.

Thirteen. The year he'd found Mom's body. The year he'd realized how little justice was in the justice system. The year he'd washed a bottle of Sneeze down with two bottles of Nyquil and woke up for the stomach pump.

Jim could taste the charcoal in his throat, the greasy grit against the back of his lips, coating his tongue. He suddenly realized the charcoal streaks down Fly's cheeks weren't mascara.

Baby began to fade, the edges first, wisping away like fog

God, Jim thought, how did a sweet little kid like that turn into Thirteen-year-old navel-face over there? That thought made Jim think Twenty-four-year-old probably wondered how come he had to end up 40 pounds overweight and saddled to a go-nowhere mail-clerk job.

"I don't remember the pain much," Jim said to Jimmy. Not the pain from the accident. Strangely, the pain he remembered was Lucy's handshake, her tears, her good-bye that ended a five-year relationship. A relationship he'd hoped would last forever.

Jimmy nodded, an ancient six-year-old pro at all this.

"She was neat," he said softly.

"Lucy?" Jim asked, surprised Jimmy knew what he was thinking.

"Yeah. Why didn't you just give her the ring?"

"People change," Jim said, done talking to the sweet little kid now.

"Hey, Smokes," Jim called to Twenty-four-year-old. "What are we doing here?"

Twenty-four-year-old got to his feet with a smooth motion Jim had given up 30 pounds ago. "Let me go through this once." He walked close enough that Jim should be able to smell the cigarette smoke, but no matter how hard he inhaled, he couldn't smell anything.

"We're dead. Can't eat, piss, or bleed. We can't get any farther away than about four feet from each other, and have to stay within

Fly's hands shook, the chain between his eyebrow and bottom lip trembled. It looked like he was ready to run. Fact was, Jim wanted to run too. Turn his back on all this, on all of them, and just get the hell away from here.

Jimmy's small hand touched Jim's free hand. "Are we dying now?"

The last bit of Baby, his chest and stomach, faded from Jim's left hand and forearm. Jim stared at where Baby had been only a moment before, and felt the dull ping of something deep within himself falling away. Emotional vertigo. He shook his head to clear it, to deny reality, then gave up and let his arm drop.

"Maybe this is the way it works," Jim used his calm voice for Fly and Jimmy, the voice even Lucy believed. "Maybe we'll go one at a time, and that's OK. I mean, Baby lasted 38 years, right?"

"Or there can only be four of us at a time," Twenty-four-year-old said. "Maximum spirit capacity, or some such shit."

Jim voiced a much darker thought. "Maybe something is happening to the living us. A stroke, brain damage, heart attack."

"Fuck," Fly said. He really looked like he needed a smoke.

"Smokes," Jim said, but Twenty-four-year-old was already handing Fly his cigarette. Fly took a couple of deep puffs and tried to pull himself together.

"Thanks," Jim said.

Twenty-four-year-old nodded. "Now what?"

Jim could feel Fly glance over at him. Jimmy squeezed Jim's hand.

Twenty-four-year-old didn't break eye contact. He tipped his head toward the hospital. He looked calm and together about it on the outside, even though Jim had a pretty good idea what he felt on the inside. Jim looked away from him and forced a cheerful note in his voice. "Time to pay yourself a visit, boys." He could tell not even Jimmy bought it.

The three stayed close to Jim. They crossed the thin, grassy strip between the parking lot and ER driveway. Their feet made no noise over the grass or the pavement. At the door to the ER, Jim put his free hand out to push the door open.

"You don't—" Jimmy said, and then he realized he didn't—didn't have to put his hand out, didn't have to brace for anything—because he was through the glass doors without opening them. He looked over his shoulder and shook his head. Zero sensation. No heat, cold, or anything that indicated they'd just passed through something solid.

"Is it always like that?" Jim asked.

Fly shrugged. "What did you expect?"

They walked through the hospital, and Jim had the strange feeling that the building moved around them more than they moved through it. After a few floors, he got used to the way it worked, and then it felt predictable, if not exactly normal. Except for having no need to open doors, they navigated the hospital like living people, hallways and doors, white signs with arrows and names. Jim took his time, trying to think.

Why hadn't he just died like he'd always thought he would—in one piece, at one time—at least as one person for God's sake. Was he afraid to die? Despite Fly's reaction, he'd never really been afraid of death, had long ago accepted its inevitability. What then? Why was he becoming ghosts of himself?

Fifth floor. Jim could feel a difference here, and knew without looking at the sign-in board that his living self must be close. He made his way down the hall and took the turn to the left. Outside a plain blond wood door, he paused.

His heart, which he hadn't noticed during the walk, the stairs, or any other time, suddenly squeezed tight, like the stress attacks he used to get.

"Damn," he whispered.

Fly nodded, and Twenty-four-year-old said, "Did I mention it hurts?" Jimmy's hand seemed lighter all of a sudden.

Jim looked down at him, and Jimmy tipped his head up and smiled. Jim swore he could see the shine of the floor through his face.

"I'm OK," Jimmy said.

Did he seem more pale than he had been moments before, his skin translucent? Jim hesitated.

"Listen," Twenty-four-year-old said, "either get this over with now, or we're getting the hell out of here."

Jim suddenly remembered 24. The year he'd gone fishing with the guys on the North Santiam. The year the air was filled with a mother's scream and a little girl slipped through the rapids. He had jumped. A face flashed by, then the orange of a life jacket. Jim grabbed. The girl slipped from his grip, and he was pulled under into cold blackness. Two months later he woke up in the hospital. He'd missed the girl's funeral, and spent his last year of college learning to walk again.

Twenty-four-year-old exhaled, long and slow, like he didn't know what Jim was remembering. "Well?" Twenty-four-year-old asked.

Jim took a deep breath. This was like that jump, except there was no way he could guess at the dangers beyond the door. He tightened his grip on Jimmy's hand and walked through.

All the things he'd expected to be in the room were there. The bland wallpaper, the dull-glossed floor, the TV stand, the bed. And in the bed, a man.

Jim stared across the room at himself. The pain in his chest tightened. He felt too hot, too cold, and sick enough to puke. He had accepted that he wasn't alive, but to see himself lying there, bandaged,

tubed, but breathing, and so utterly alive—it all seemed wrong.

This, this ... imposter was going to finish his life, make his decisions, do the things he'd put off for later, or worse, never do them at all.

Screw that.

Shock gave way to anger.

Jim strode forward. The pain in his chest tightened the nearer he came to his living self.

He leaned over the bed, his hands extended. He didn't know exactly what he was planning to do—maybe shake him, maybe choke the life out of him.

Just before his fingers touched his living flesh he heard Twenty-four-year-old say, "Do it."

Fly said, "Shit," and Jimmy whispered, "Oh, no."

Jim did it anyway. His hands sank into his living chest. A hot electric wave crashed down over him. There was a slippery moment of vertigo while he fell and fell, too far, out to the edge of a shocking coldness. Then he turned and willed himself up, to the heat, to the electric pulse and buzz of blood and cell, to the clattered, noisy thoughts, the pain, the breath. To living.

Jim took a breath. It was harsh, dry. He coughed and tasted the stale breeze from the oxygen tube. The machine beep was suddenly loud, the bed beneath him hard, the stiff sheets rough against his skin, skin that felt wrong, too heavy, too hot.

Was he alive? He opened his eyes. The ghosts were there, Fly and Twenty-four-year-old and Jimmy, leaning down over him. They were real enough that he could see the surprise in Jimmy's eyes.

"Wow," Jimmy mouthed.

Jim tried to speak. Don't leave, he tried to say, to think, to make them understand, but his throat was raw, his tongue swollen. Exhaustion tugged at his mind, and he felt sleep sliding inexorably closer.

Twenty-four-year-old raised an eyebrow and looked at Fly.

Did they hear him? Jim tried again to speak, but not even a moan made it past his lips.

The ghosts leaned down over him, so close they seemed to blend into one person, a mix of piercing and innocence and calm eyes.

Don't go, Jim tried to say, but his mouth filled with the taste of charcoal and the oxygen tube smelled like smoke. He thought he heard a baby cry and Jimmy laugh, then sleep welled over him and took him down into darkness.

So, can I go home yet? Jim asked. He'd already spent a week sleeping and recovering. Today he felt more whole than he had in a long time.

The doctor looked up from the clipboard and smiled. "Not yet, but sooner than you think. How does day after tomorrow sound to you?"

"Couldn't be better," Jim said.

"Good." The doctor turned to the door. "Just call the nurses if you need anything—and Jim, stick to the speed limit from now on." The doctor stepped out of the room.

Jim nodded. There were a lot of things he planned on doing better. He picked up the pen and pad of paper next to his bed and wrote the numbers 1 through 20 down one side of the page. He penned: "Call Lucy" after number five.

He still had the ring at home on his dresser. He would ask her. Not this week, but not never either. First they would have to really get to know each other again. He had a feeling she'd be surprised at how much he'd changed.

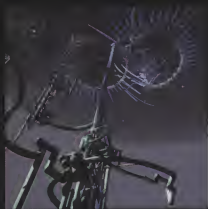
Before that, though, he wanted to try for a better position at work, or maybe do a little traveling.

Jim moved the pen between one and five, letting his thoughts wander. Should he start his own business? Buy a house?

He rested the pen against his lips, and reread his list.

A chill washed over his skin. Written neatly after number one, two, and three were the words: Finish college, Pierce ear, Eat ice cream.

Jim glanced up at the mirror across the room. He saw four much younger versions of himself, layered within his reflection. "How about ice cream first?" he said. And all of Jim grinned. ♠



DARREL ANDE

Although he's a cutting-edge character, Darrel Anderson's roots go way down deep into fantasy illustration. Today he may be a Janus-faced creator, half-artist and half-inventor/programmer, but his first love was science fiction and fantasy.

This digital visionary began his artistic odyssey in the late 1970s when, as a self-described "hippie craftsman," he made a living by attending science fiction and fantasy conventions where he'd sell his hand-pulled silkscreens of dragons and wizards.

A sketcher from childhood, Anderson expected to become an industrial illustrator. "Before art intervened, I was on hard rails toward a career in science," he says. "But there was always a visual artistic bent to even my scientific pursuits. I drew in order to visualize the things that I imagined."

Then the sixties happened, deflecting him and his partner-in-art-crimes, Rick Berry, into the world of underground comix and fantasy and science fiction art.

"What got me involved in printmaking was the idea of



ANDERSON:

BY KAREN HABER

ROOTED IN FANTASY

being able to produce some sort of print to send to these convention art shows. I could cover more ground that way. And I saw that fantasy subjects sold much better than science fiction."

His transmogrification from hippie craftsman to hi-tech wizard began a few years later. At about the same time that

Berry was creating the world's first digital cover illustration for a novel, William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, Anderson was embarking on his own journey with digital art. When asked to create illustrations for the primitive computer games of that time, he quickly became frustrated by the limitations of the available tools and began to tinker with the programs.



"Given my leanings, I took very easily to programming, and I immediately began writing my own tools because I couldn't stand working the way I was being asked to work."

Two decades and one change of millennium later, what once was on-a-hunch tinkering has evolved into GROBOTO, a Macintosh software application designed to give kids a fast, fun, intuitive 3-D drawing environment that can teach them about artistic—and scientific—exploration. For Anderson, the payoff comes not only from enabling kids to explore creatively, but from being able to use his own creation.

"The little secret of almost everything I've done as an illustrator is that I'm always looking for an excuse to pursue those things that have caught my fancy in the world of imaging."

With Berry, Anderson cofounded the collaborative entity BRAID, which provides

state-of-the-art prints of work by its member artists and also markets GROBOTO, which Anderson is readying for a full "launch" later this year.

Although he's a self-described "hermit by nature," Anderson enjoys the act of creative collaboration. "If you consider art to be a form of self-expression, then collaboration broadens your ability to express because it takes you into areas and reveals aspects of self that you might not arrive at otherwise."

"I also hope to achieve a collaboration between the art and the viewer, to elicit active participation in the act of 'seeing.' That's why it's vital for the artist to avoid overworking and overdescribing—it leaves no room for the viewer to personalize the image."

Anderson's résumé includes book covers for leading fantasy and science fiction publishers such as St. Martin's Press and Avon Books, illustrations for interactive computer games, and animation sequences for various studios and clients. Anderson collaborated

with Rick Berry and Gene Bodio to script, design, and produce the CGI cyberspace climax for the TriStar motion picture *Johnny Mnemonic*. He has received considerable recognition for his work, including two first-place awards in the annual Macintosh Masters competition—*MacWorld Magazine*, top honors in PIXAR's call for images at the 1991 MacWorld Expo, and publication of various works by the Spectrum art annual.

Despite the often-abstract nature of his images, he finds himself in sympathy with narrative art. "I've long been interested in narrative art, whether it's narrative in the sense of expressing an idea or concept—like a technical drawing—or the more traditional notion of something that tells a story."

"Much of the art we've done in BRAID is art that is authoring, in a sense—we have our own ideas or stories to tell. Or they're stories that are simply born during the process of creating the art."

"I came up working with traditional tools.



I love 'em. It's kind of frustrating at the moment—I'm so deeply involved in digital projects of various sorts that I don't find much time to pick up a paintbrush or a pencil. As far as computers have come, they still can't compete with the infinite resolution and infinitely fast feedback that you get from working with natural media. You do it and it's there. It can keep up with you. With computers it's rarely that kind of process.

"The flip side of what I just said is that I never had any kind of prejudice about media. I will use anything that will get me to the artistic goal. I've always seen tools as tools. When the computer came along it was, in many ways, just another tool ... and an extraordinary one that expands creative options in unprecedented ways."

How did GROBOTO grow?

"GROBOTO came about while I was looking—as always—for the kinds of imaging tools that allow for those happy accidents, to create quickly and interactively with things



over which you have only partial control. It was a 3-D algorithmic art package. Spirals, curls, fractals, that kind of stuff, which you can interactively tweak and steer."

What might have been merely an imaging tool was transformed by Anderson's attendance at the Digital Burgess, an international conference held in Banff, Canada, in 1998 to explore artificial life. The presentations and ensuing dialogue between leaders in the fields of paleontology, artificial life, and digital/algorithmic art transformed Anderson's notion of the possibilities of digital art.

"It was an eye opener. I saw a natural tie-in between what I was doing and the kinds of stuff they were pursuing. That sort of brought those two realms together and finally over the past couple of years I've

been able to implement some of that into GROBOTO."

He returned to work on his program with new zeal. "I've always gotten along well with kids and enjoyed interacting with them. And beyond that, I think I have a real sensitivity to that creative spark that is there initially in all children, and that, all too often, is snuffed out. I have a deep interest in things that help kids express and maintain that enthusiasm. Whether you pursue art or not, it's an essential component of living and learning. It gives you the freedom to explore and think creatively throughout life."

How does GROBOTO work?

"Well, it has a lot of options—what they have in common is an interaction between you and the programmed behavior of the tools—collaboration of a sort. The balance of control between you and the machine runs the gamut.

"The artificial life stuff—inspired by the people at Digital Burgess—is a kind of genetic algorithm. You give the program a soup of behaviors, interesting kinds of 3-D forms and growth patterns that you like, then let it start combining those behaviors, picking the results that are the most interesting, guiding the process. It can be great fun. It's a way of searching a slice of the infinite realm of all possible forms—discovering things you might never have imagined. It can be frustrating too, just like in the real world: it can lead to a dead end.

"I think it's inevitable that it became a tool for me as much as anything else," he says with a laugh. "But the front-end accessibility for kids is there."

And so, Darrel Anderson, one-time hippie craftsman and purveyor of silkscreened images of dragons and wizards has become a digital wizard inventing new ways for children to explore the world of art and science through computers and develop their own artistic fantasies in the process. ■

For a better look at BRAID, GROBOTO, and more of Anderson's work, see the Web site www.braid.com.





Get medieval with Buffy and the Scooby Gang in a new RPG.

as the series starts its seventh year on TV, players can finally adventure in the world of *Buffy* with the release of the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Roleplaying Game* from Eden Studios, makers of the *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* and *Conspiracy X* RPGs. The 250-page book is in full color, with stills and screen captures from the show on nearly every page.

The book starts with a Christopher Golden short story followed by an introduction to the Buffyverse and summary of the first five seasons of the show. Chapters follow on how to make characters, the actual rules of the game, the use of magic, background about Sunnydale, and a sample adventure. The appendices contain a guide to Buffyspeak, the collected tables of the game, a glossary, and an index.

The book is written in a conversational style peppered with jokes and comments. There are lots of quotes from the show interspersed in the text to illustrate where various rules meet up with what has happened on the show. Since it is *Buffy*, most of the quotes are funny; it is best for game masters to resign themselves to the fact the large chunks of the first couple of sessions are going to be lost to players

reading their favorite quotes to each other from the rule book.

The introduction explains what roleplaying is in general and what it is in the Buffyverse in particular. The game assumes players have seen the show, but doesn't demand they have watched or remember every episode. The crucial information is contained in the season summaries and the guide to Sunnydale. For the game masters, the bestiary section has some of the series' Big Bads and best monsters. There are templates for creating vampires in three flavors: new vampire, vampire minion, and elder vampire. The stats of Angelus are in this section, as are demons, werewolves, and other monsters.

The engine that powers the game is a simplified version of the Unisystem, used in Eden's other games. *Buffy* has three broad character types, but no *D&D*-like classes. The three are: White Hats (normal people like Xander), Heroes (like Riley), and Experienced Heroes (like Buffy). The choice of type affects how many points the character can spend and on which attributes, skills, and qualities.

Heroes and Experienced Heroes are always going to be able to do more things—and be better at those things—than White Hats. What balances them is that White Hats start with more drama points and can purchase effects with them more cheaply. Thus, while the Experienced Heroes will tend to survive combat by beating their opponents senseless, White Hats will tend to defeat evil by timely interventions of the plot and surroundings.

Drama points are an excellent mechanic and their use is very in keeping with the source material. In the early days of the show (which beginning characters best model), Buffy was the only one of the gang who could really fight. Everyone, how-



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ever, chipped in and the day was often saved by Willow or Xander doing something extraordinary and heroic—the sorts of things that drama points allow. Balancing as the mechanic is, game masters should discuss power levels with their players. The rules allow for campaigns where everyone starts as the same type, and even campaigns that change the mythology so that more than one person can play a Slayer.

Buffy is not a rules-light system, but does use the idea of meta-skills, meaning that one skill lets characters do many things. The skill Getting Medieval, for instance, is how well the character can play a Slayer.

Characters are fleshed out by qualities and drawbacks. These attributes cover characters' looks, money, magic ability, luck, and much more. Being a vampire is a quality; making bad jokes is a drawback. Being a vampire is a quality; being bookish is a drawback. And so on. There are several archetype characters in the center of the book for players who don't want to make their own. All the series regulars are provided with stats as well, but this is mostly to give players something to aspire to. The series characters are built using lots of experience points. The only glaring omission here is Faith, the rogue Slayer. One can only hope this is because she will be getting her own supplement.

The *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Roleplaying Game* passes the tests of being faithful to the series, of being easy to read, and of being fun to play. Now if only Josh Whedon, the series creator, would write an adventure or two for it.

Also new out in the paper-and-dice role-playing world is *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game*, a hardback book of 304 pages from Decipher Games. It is also powered by a ported game engine. In this case it is the

Coda system that is used in Decipher's *Star Trek* games.

The book contains 12 chapters, including an introduction. The first three are about the Middle-Earth setting, and the next five deal with creating characters. Chapter 9 covers the Coda system rules. The last chapters are for game masters and contain information on running the game as well as the stats for all the famous nasties that the characters might run into.

As a setting, *LoTR* holds a special place, because so many clichés of dungeon-based roleplaying games rose from scenes in

Tolkien's books. Things as "simple" as a magically locked door were objects of wonder in the original trilogy. RPGs have since made them commonplace. The *LoTR* RPG's goal is to reclaim some of the wonder of the books.

Chapter 1 lists the various regions of Middle-Earth, lays out their condition at the End of the Third Age, and adds information on happenings at the dawn of the Fourth Age. Very useful stuff for players and game masters who never made it through all the appendixes and the *Silmarillion*, not to mention the Histories and so on.

Right at the beginning of Chapter 2 are six sample characters. Two of them are created step by step in sidebars, so players have both the detailed description and the finished character to refer to as they read.

There are no alignments in *LoTR*, but there is a section on the characteristics that heroes should have. It outlines the nature of heroism, and is part of the mission statement. The game doesn't ask players to create and play adventures. It asks them to make heroes.

Characters can be from one of the four races of the Fellowship: Dwarf, Elf, Hobbit, or Man. The races are not play-balanced. Each race gets certain skills and modifiers and bonuses, but Elves get the most. Again, game masters should address this before the process

of making characters is started. If balanced characters are important to the group, then either everyone should be an Elf or no one should. For instance, there is a section on aging and how it affects attributes. Elves, who don't age, aren't even on the table.

Instead of classes, players choose Orders for their characters. The Orders are Barbarian, Craftsman, Loremaster, Magician, Mariner, Minstrel, Noble, Rogue, and Warrior. Each grants choices among certain skills and abilities. Players can choose to further specialize their characters as archers, captains, knights, rangers, spies, or wizards, or they can choose not to have an order at all. Such novice characters, like the Hobbits in the book, learn their skills as they go along.

This game also has advantages and flaws that players can buy for their characters. These are not balanced against one another. The idea, again, is to reflect the world as Tolkien wrote it. And nowhere is this more apparent than when the game moves on to magic, which the game divides into two types: wizardry and sorcery. Wizardry is the default method and there are lots of spells, but they are very low-powered compared with a typical fantasy RPG. Sorcery is the form of magic suitable for Sauron and his servants. These are much more like standard game spells, but using them costs the character increased Corruption. Capping it off is the section on the feel of magic in Middle-Earth. Rather than a tool like electricity, magic is supposed to be subtle and yet integral. Magic accentuates the world so that it does not rain on a king's coronation day and the very earth itself is warped by Sauron's presence.

Like the *Buffy* game, *LoTR* contains lots of quotes from the trilogy and these are mixed with lots of stills from the movie. The overall effect is to make you want to watch the movie again and then read the books all over—or the other way around. The game is faithful to the books and to Tolkien's vision of what heroism and adventure actually were. *LoTR* is the harder game to play because it calls for more of a mind-set change than *Buffy*, but it is very evocative.



Icewind Dale II is a computer roleplaying game for the PC from Interplay that is definitely not trying to run away from the clichés of fantasy roleplaying. In fact, it celebrates them. The game is about assembling a party and going off to kill monsters and gain treasure. It is based on the original fantasy RPG, *Dungeons & Dragons*, and actually models the latest edition (called the D20 System) of those rules. The action takes place in the *Forgotten Realms*, one of the most popular settings sold for the use with *D&D*.

The game is exceptionally clean and smooth-running right out of the box. This is probably because it uses the same game engine as the original *Icewind Dale*. Characters start out chasing the goblins out of a small town, but as they explore the town, they find a number of quests and manage to accumulate quite a few experience points while seldom raising their weapons in anger.

Players can create and guide up to six player characters at once, or (and this is even more fun) up to six players can play the game cooperatively over a LAN or the Internet. This edition adds a couple of new classes and races. It also adds skills and abilities that were not present in the first game. Characters need these because they start out very frail, particularly the magic users. As the characters kill things and gain experience points, they become very powerful, but characters take longer to gain a level with these new rules.

Icewind Dale II offers a blend of roleplaying and pure, intense tactical combat. It has an interesting story with lots of good NPCs and some very funny dialogue, all while constantly challenging the player or players. On top of all that, there is no fantasy RPG that has a better cooperative play mode.

Kingdom Hearts, for the PS2 from Square, is a completely different sort of game. Not just from *Idol* and *LoT*, but from other games, period. *Kingdom Hearts* combines the brooding, serious characters of the *Final Fantasy* series with the silly, beloved characters from Walt Disney's animated films. The way this action-adventure game plays isn't revolutionary, but the combination of characters is constantly shocking.

How do these two famous sets of characters come together? An evil force is drawing on the life energies of many worlds with the help of a horde of monsters called the Heartless. Visually, the Heartless are a cross between the black mages of *Final Fantasy* and *Martin the Martian*. The player takes the role of Sora, a child who is voice-acted by Haley Joel Osment. Sora sets out to find his missing friends with the help of Goofy and Donald Duck.

Characterwise, there is more Disney than Square in the game. Gameplay, however is all Square. *KH* contains character building, secret items, minigames, and boss battles. The best thing about the game is meeting all the Disney characters as Sora travels from world to world, each patterned after a Disney movie.

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The second best thing is trying to solve the battles with the bosses that Cora encounters. Sadly, the battles with the rest of the Heartless are not as much fun, although it is a kick to be fighting evil side by side with Goofy and Donald.

The Mark of Kri, also for the PS2 from Sony, lacks the compelling characters that *KH* has, but it does have better game play. Players take the role of a barbarian islander named Rau. With his spirit guide, a bird named Kuzo, Rau takes up a quest to stop the bad guys from getting the Mark of Kri, a powerful spell that could end the world if cast.

That's the story of the game. Actual game play consists of sneaking and battling Rau through many levels. There are enemies to kill and puzzles to solve. As the player over-



comes these various obstacles, the game unlocks various rewards, which range from gaining access to battle arenas to concept art and new costumes for Rau.

Two things distinguish the fighting and the puzzle solving. For the fighting it is the lock-on sys-

tem. The player pushes the right analog stick and a thin "lock beam" extends out from Rau's body. Sweeping this beam over an enemy assigns him to one of the three attack buttons on the controller. This allows Rau to fight with up to three enemies simultaneously, doing combos on them based on the attack keys picked. This system makes combat easy, and the animators have made it look good, too.

Puzzle solving revolves around Kuzo, the feathered spirit guide. Throughout the levels, spinning icons mark perches for Kuzo. The

Spells & Magic for d20 Games

Over the past few years, the d20 system's proven strength has been its flexibility. Given time, almost any game or gaming situation can be adapted successfully to d20, and with any number of generic-flavored supplements on the market, a good DM can custom-craft a solid campaign from bits and pieces of the available sourcebooks. Indeed, it is often these generic sourcebooks that prove to be the most valuable to good DMs, because they allow them to put together their own worlds without someone else's getting in the way.

Such is the case with *Spells & Magic* (Bastion Press, softback, 96 pp., \$24.95). Designed to be used with any high-fantasy d20 game, *Spells & Magic* is a collection of new types of magic and magic-users. Included are (among others) blood mages, spellcasters who fuel their spells with their own (or others') blood; jewel mages, magicians who channel their energies through precious stones to enhance their effects; and faeriers, those who deal chiefly with fey magic. Each new type of magic is given its own general description, prestige class, and specific set of rules. In addition, a fairly lengthy set of new spells and magic items is included, most of which are attuned to the spellcasters presented in the book, but many of which can be used (again) in just about any magic-driven d20 game.

Spells & Magic's generic nature is both its greatest strength and its greatest flaw. As mentioned earlier, it (and books like it) is designed to be dropped into nearly any kind of high-fantasy campaign, and the writers have gone to lengths to avoid putting in any material that might conflict with a preexisting setting. Unfortunately, this also means that it is largely up to the DM to decide how these spellcasters fit into his world, and while suggestions are offered, no publisher could ever hope to create a book like this intended to mesh perfectly with every DM's world. In short, the time that you would have spent poring off the trappings of someone else's setting, you now have to spend figuring out how these things work in your own setting.

For the do-it-yourself DM, *Spells & Magic* is highly recommended. Its unique flavors of magic and magicians put more than a few interesting twists on a home-brewed campaign setting and, within themselves, the magic types are fully fleshed out and ready to play. Those with no time or inclination might be put off by the idea of deciding how these creations fit logically into their game worlds. The benefits, however, greatly outweigh the work involved in such a task.



Jim Stutz

player can send Kuzo to land on these spots, and then they can change the view to look through Kuzo's eyes. In this way Kuzo acts as a scout and as a problem solver, such as when landing Kuzo on the top of a ladder causes it to fall within reach or when it flips switches that Rau can't reach.



Extremely well animated, particularly during the fight scenes and where Rau uses stealth to kill various enemies, *The Mark of Kri* has style and good game play. It lacks the "this is so weird" factor of *KH* and getting better through experience trill of *Idol*, but it is straightforward killing fun.

Cultures 2: Gates of Asgard, for the PC from JoWood Productions, isn't about killing, although there are battles that can be fought. It is about building cities, but it goes about it in a unique way. The key to creating is not the buildings, but rather the people who live in them. Each person in the game is a unique character who can be assigned a career. As the characters work at their careers, their skills improve. As their skills improve, they can advance to new careers. The careers, the skill sets, of the characters determine what sort of buildings can be constructed in the city. Thus, to build a bakery, the player will have a farmer learn to be a miller, and when it has mastered that, the player will convert him to a baker. And so on.

The characters live lives, eating and sleeping and working. Couples marry, although the player has to encourage them to have kids, which is a little odd. The kids grow up and get assigned careers. All this takes a lot of management by the player, but the interface helps. When something needs the player's attention, a banner appears at the top of the screen. The trick is to see if the player can stay on top of all his characters as his city grows and changes and expands. At its best, players will find themselves so immersed that they lose track of time. **A**

books

Continued from page 30

of pain, injury, and imperfect healing.

The Scar takes place mostly at sea, aboard a floating metropolis called Armada, the seaborne counterpart of *Perdido Street*'s New Crobuzon and, like it, a grotesquely fecund amalgam of Dickens' London with Kafka's Prague by way of M. John Harrison's *Viriconium*. Miéville's imagination is fired by cities; he would build them out of thin air if necessary. Here, he just adds water. Fittingly, the shades of Conrad, Coleridge and, most of all, Melville haunt these pages ... only Miéville's Moby Dick makes the white whale look like a guppy, and his Billy Budd is a vampire.

The central characters of *The Scar* are Bellis Coldwine, a 40-something linguist on the lam from New Crobuzon, and Tanner Sack, one of the Remade, expelled from the city for unnamed crimes. Bellis is a haughty intellectual, a woman who finds it easier to love places than people. Tanner is a simpler soul, a gentle man awkwardly inhabiting a powerful body. There are, of course, a number of other important characters—Uther Doull, a ruthless swordsman; the rulers of Armada, a man and woman known only as the Lovers, whose cult of personality depends on S&M rituals involving mutual scarification; the Brucolac, a vampire with a conscience if not a soul; and a spy who moves undetected about the city with the aid of a deliciously Lovecraftian artifact—but Bellis and Tanner are the touchstones to which Miéville repeatedly returns as his relentlessly suspenseful plot moves forward.

Like all aboard Armada, like the city itself, Bellis and Tanner are moved by obsessions they cannot control and can scarcely understand, obsessions born of love—or the desire springing from its lack—and leading to tragedies of misplaced trust, betrayal, and loss. It's the absence of the capacity for mature, unselfish love in almost every character that makes *The Scar* a grimmer if no less exuberant book than *Perdido Street*. Even Tanner, who comes closest, hides his love from his object and even partially from himself. Yet by the end of the book, there is a sense that a sliver of redemption has been earned by dint of much suffering ... not a happy ending as such, but, rather, a new capacity for happiness in Bellis, Tanner, and others that may or may not be realized in the future. For all his love of the fantastic, Miéville is a compassionate realist when it comes to the heart and soul. His characters can move us to laughter or tears even as his imagination makes us gasp in wonder. And as good as it is, *The Scar* is only his third novel. This prodigiously talented young writer is going to get even better. **A+**

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fable from a cage

Continued from page 39

started toward the fire and the smith's tools. The hands fluttered, faded, returned. She'd been tired anyway, she said, and now she was grievously wounded. Her hands of air and fire were tired. Still, his vision dimmed and he fell to his knees near the anvil. He reached out and gripped a pair of iron pincers. He struggled to lift the heavy tool, but managed to press it to his throat.

The woman screamed anew, and the invisible hands withdrew.

The thief laboriously gained his feet and stepped toward her. The ball of iron was almost invisible now, burning its way deeply into her guts.

"We could have had such fun," she said, coughing up smoke. "You would have lived forever, if you'd just agreed to serve me."

"I think I might have figured out a way to do that anyway," the thief said. He struck her in the face with the iron pincers.

It took him almost a full week to eat her body. She had no organs or bones, just soft, spongy meat throughout, which both relieved and disturbed him. Her flesh tasted like nothing at all, but it still repulsed him to cut and consume her.

The stories said that the Fair Folk had no souls, and so he wondered whether eating her would have any effect—what good was ingesting the spirit of a soulless thing?

But the night he finished her, he had strange dreams. And when he climbed the ladder and emerged into the dark forest, he discovered that he had hands of air and fire, and could move things with a thought, and feel them from far away.

As the years passed, he found that he did not age as men did, nor did he take wounds.

And so he felt satisfied, at last, that he was a master thief.

That's my story, boys. And now the sun's near gone, and you should go home, yes?

Ah, the questions, the questions. What became of the thief? Well. Long after he ate the woman who was not a woman, after many years of wandering, he began to ponder his weakness. Because you see, along with his hands of air and fire and his long life, he'd also acquired the woman's weakness. He could no longer touch iron—the metal grew cold if he even put his hand near it, and he knew it would burn him if he touched it.

But he thought to himself, *Am I not, at bottom, a man? Could I not, perhaps, overcome this weakness, if I only had the right meal?*

The thief thought back to the woman's suggestion that he could eat a smith to gain familiarity with tools. And the thief thought, *Yes—perhaps I'll eat a smith, and gain his ease with iron, and the metal will vex me no more. For it is amazing how many things in*

this world are made of iron, boys, not least of all this cage. The thief had never eaten a man—he'd kept that vow all those years, because the woman did not count as a human, you see—but he thought the time had come to forget silly vows, just as he'd forgotten the face of the captain's daughter.

So the thief came to a village, and took a room in an inn, which had a ram's head on its sign, as many of them do. And the next day he went to the smith's. He was uncomfortable around the horseshoes and the anvil and the hammers but managed to put on a peaceful face. He baited the smith, intending to inquire after a bit of work and then kill him and spirit his body away for a leisurely meal.

The smith looked familiar, and from the way his eyes went wide, the thief knew he recognized him, too.

Ah, boys—your own eyes are wide. Is this a familiar story?

The smith looked just like the old keeper of the inn, the one the woman had killed that first night the thief traveled with her. Casting back, far back in his memory, the thief thought that this, perhaps, was that same village, grown a little larger, but still the same. He realized the smith was the innkeeper's son all grown up, that with his father dead he'd had to apprentice to a trade other than inn-keeping.

The son recognized the thief, and in his face it was clear that he remembered the witchery, remembered the murder and seeing the thief fly away.

The thief threw out his hands of air and fire, but the smith had iron all around him, and a hammer in his hand, and the invisible hands rebounded from those things.

The smith struck our thief with a hammer, and knocked him down, and the thief woke in a cage—yes, like this one, very like—with a grievous burn on his face from the hammer's iron. The thief tried to escape, but he could not open the cage himself, because his hands could not touch the iron bars, neither his real hands nor his other ones.

And now, my boys—the moral.

I fear I have misled you. There is no moral. Because a moral comes at the end of the tale. If I stayed in this cage, and died, there might be some lesson to be learned from my long life. But my life hasn't ended yet, and so it's a poor time for accounting, before the ledger's even closed.

Because I can still grab you, brats, despite this metal all around. I can reach my hands of air and fire through these bars and grasp you lightly by the necks, as I've done now. And you, smith's son...you'll go, and take—and steal—your father's smallest hammer and chisel, and come back here in the dark, and break this cage open. If you don't, I'll squeeze your friends until they're blue, and then black. And if you serve me...perhaps I'll teach you secrets, and show you wonders.

You only look afraid, now, but you'll learn to look happy, and hopeful, and bright, in time.

And after you release me, perhaps we can find something good to eat, yes?

stegosaurus boy

Continued from page 59

were killed. For teaching people how to vote, Brian. That's all."

"For teaching coloreds to vote. Remember that."

He ignored me. "Is that something to be killed for? Is that right?"

"No," I breathed out slowly, thinking of Joseph Kinder. "No, I reckon not."

"They'll never get caught," he said staring down the hole. Tears ran down his cheeks. "Nobody'll ever pay for it. Things'll just go on the way they have been for years and years."

I thought about Joseph and the gorilla, Damascus and the lion, Papa and I sleeping in a tarpaper shack. "You never know what's going to happen. You just never know."

"That's just the sort of thing people say when they want you to shut up and not ask questions," Chris said bitterly. "When they don't want to tell you anything."

Something was going on inside of him but I let it pass. "So what's this got to do with our stegosaurus?"

"Nothing. Just ... nothing." We sat down and dangled our legs over the edge. "Is it completely ruined?"

"Maybe not," I said. "It's got to be pretty smashed up but we know what was there. It'd take a while but I reckon it could be sorted out."

"Is anybody going to do that? Without pictures?"

I thought about that. A stegosaurus in North Alabama was pretty hard to believe all by itself. "Not unless we do it," I said. "Not unless we got proof. It'd take a while but I bet we could."

Chris swung his legs out and for a minute I thought he was going to slip off. "I'm going back to Chicago. I was going to tell you after we got the pictures and went to the university. I'm going back to live with Mom." He looked up at me. "My folks are getting divorced. She's not sick. I just said that."

"You just never know what someone's going to say, do you?"

He laughed shortly. "I guess not."

We were quiet for a while. "I wish you'd stay," I said finally.

"I can't. Dad's just ... No. It's not good being with my Mom but it's better."

"It'd be awful hard to do it by myself."

"Then, leave it," he said. "It's not going anywhere. Maybe someday I'll come back here and we'll finish it together."

I could see he thought nothing would ever come of it but I nodded anyway. "OK." We didn't say anything for a long time.

Then, Chris stood up and dusted himself off. "Can you take a picture of the two of us? And the sinkhole?"

"Wait a minute." With both ropes tied together, I was able to make one that reached the bottom. We tied it off and I climbed down

and stood on the shards rummaging around.
"How do you know it won't open up another hundred feet?"

"I don't," I called up. "But you better hold on to that rope."

After a couple of minutes I found what I was looking for and climbed back up.

"Here," I said and held out my hands. "Pick one."

"What are they?"

"Rib fragments. One for each of us."

Chris looked at me for a long minute. "Thanks," he said at last. "Thanks a lot."

I set up the timer and the camera and took the picture, both of us grinning like idiots and holding up the ribs of the stegosaurus.

We went back to town and stopped at Woolworth's for a Coke. Then, Chris gave me his address up in Chicago and caught the bus home.

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL I DEVELOPED THE pictures myself in the school darkroom. You could see the two of us standing next to an open pit in the ground. The rib fragments barely showed but I knew they were there. I sent one copy to Chicago and mounted the other behind the stegosaurus model. Totem or not, it's part of who I am.

Trying to keep the monthly changes secret during the school year was hard at first. Still, I got by. That sort of thing gets easier over time. Dad helped a lot. The Kinder family has a whole bag of tricks to manage such things. My family has been doing this for a while. Even so, every time it happens, I think of Chris and that summer.

Chris was wrong. Things do change.

Joe Stillings must have taken Papa's words to heart. That September, the Klan got mentioned in the paper about a beating over in Scottsboro. But by then, Joe had quit. I don't know that he changed his views much but he didn't take to the Klan anymore. Maybe he couldn't stomach what they had wanted him to do to his own kind. In October, Papa managed to finally persuade his boss that Joseph should be a draftsman—turned out he'd been working on it for nearly a year. Like Papa says, it ain't right, it ain't pretty, it's not like being an engineer and they still have to keep it a secret like the communists are after them. But it's a step and it's better than being a clerk.

Everybody has to fight for what they want one inch at a time.

In December of 1964, the FBI arrested Cecil Price, Sheriff Rainey, and the rest. That was almost a year ago and the trial hasn't even started. Maybe it never will. But who knows? Anything could happen. They could go to jail yet.

Chris hasn't come back and I haven't returned to the dig, so I reckon the stegosaurus is still down there just like it has been for millions of years.

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CHRIS COCOZZA has been illustrating for over 15 years. His style portrays a realistic conceptual collage that depicts many of the issues confronting society and culture today. The ideas glide effortlessly from one to another visually. His work easily transports the viewer to new and fantastic realms. He is a member of the Society of Illustrators in NYC. See more of his work at www.theispot.com/cocozza, www.blackbook.com/cocozza, or www.altpick.com/cocozza.

HEINZ INSU FENKL is the author of *Memoirs of My Ghost Brother*, an autobiographical novel about growing up as a biracial child in Korea in the 1960s. The son of a German-American soldier and a Korean black-marketeer, he was raised in Korea, Germany, and the United States. Currently, he lives in New York with his wife, Annie B. Dalton, and their daughter.

KAREN HABER is the author of eight novels including *Star Trek Voyager: Bless the Beasts*, co-author of *Science of the X-Men*, and editor of *Meditations on Middle-Earth*. She reviews art books for *LOCUS* magazine and has profiled artists for many publications including *American Artist*, *Southwest Art*, *Science Fiction Age*, and *Realms of Fantasy*.

LORI KOEFOED is a native Californian and a graduate of San Diego State University (BA Advertising) and California State University Long Beach (MFA Illustration). Since 1994, she has worked as a freelance illustrator in the advertising, greeting card, magazine, and book publishing industries. Lori's work has been featured in several juried annuals and exhibitions, including the Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles (SILA), Communication Arts Illustration Annual (41), and Spectrum 7. Her original paintings have also been shown in various galleries and art museums in Southern California. In addition to her freelance work, Lori teaches classes in Illustrative Painting, Editorial Illustration, and Two-Dimensional Design at the Art Institute of Southern California in Laguna Beach.

DEVON MONK lives in Salem, Oregon, with her husband, two sons, and a colorful assortment of friends and family. Her fiction has appeared in such magazines as *Amazing Stories*, *Talebones*, *Black Gate*, and a variety of anthologies.

RESA NELSON is a freelance writer and a Clarion '85 graduate. Her fiction has been published in *Science Fiction Age*, *Aboriginal Science Fiction*, and several anthologies. She acted as screenwriter and/or producer for three independent short films made in the Boston area, which gave her experience ranging from running a casting call to acting as a body double. Resa is currently writing a novel based on "The Dragonslayer's Sword," a short story first published in the premiere issue of *Science Fiction Age*.

STEVEN POPKES lives in Hopkinton, Mass., where, with the help of his wife and son, he is attempting to build a farm on two acres of land. His stories have appeared in *Astmoor's* and *Fantasy & Science Fiction*. This is his fourth appearance in *Realms of Fantasy*. "The Color of Winter" was a Nebula finalist, and he was co-author on the *Future Boston* anthology. He has been a house builder, a whitewater rafting guide, a morgue technician, conservation agent, and a researcher on the neurophysiology of dogs. He currently works for a company that builds aircraft instrumentation, and is well on his way to getting his pilot's license.

TIM PRATT lives in Oakland, California, where he works as an assistant editor at *Locust* magazine. He also edits *StarLine*, the journal of the Science Fiction Poetry Association. To find out more, visit his Web site at <http://www.sff.net/people/timpratt>.

KAREN TRAVIS is a journalist from Hampshire, England. Her short stories have appeared in *Astmoor's* and *On Spec*, and her *City of Pearl* science fiction trilogy is due to be published by HarperCollins.

CARRIE VAUGHN's stories have appeared in *Talebones*, *Weird Tales*, and *Sword and Sorceress*. She is a graduate of the Odyssey writing workshop and holds a Masters in English literature. All her spare time and money go to her Appaloosa mare, Rosie. See photos of Carrie and Rosie horsing around at <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/home/pages/CLVvaughn>.

GAHAN WILSON's cartoons are known chiefly because of his affiliation with *Playboy* magazine, but have shown up in periodicals as diverse as *The New Yorker*, *Weird Tales*, *Paris match*, and the cover of *Newsweek*. Gahan is also a talented writer whose often-macabre fiction has appeared in *Omnibus* and the original *Dangerous Visions*. He created a CD-ROM entitled *Gahan Wilson's Ultimate Haunted House*, demonic baseball cards, and a telefilm for Showtime. He makes his home on Long Island.

PAUL WITCOVER is a writer who lives in New York City. He is the author of the novel *Waking Beauty*, co-author of the comic book *ANIMA*, and is currently finishing up his second novel.



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